The University of Chicago
Libraries

A PRIEST FOR EVER

A PRIEST FOR EVER

A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE ENTITLED
"TO THE HEBREWS"

By

J. P. ALEXANDER

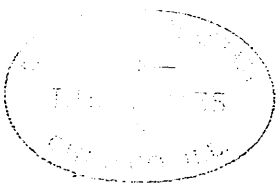
with Foreword by

THE VERY REVEREND PRINCIPAL
W. M. MACGREGOR, D.D.

The Bruce Lectures, December, 1933

JAMES CLARKE & CO., LTD.
5, WARDROBE PLACE, CARTER LANE, E.C.4

BS 3775
.A 37



MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY PURNELL AND SONS, LTD.
PAULTON (SOMERSET) AND LONDON

1254909

To

J. A. D.

AND

J. W. C.

FOREWORD

I MADE acquaintance with parts of the argument of this book some years ago when the author delivered the "Bruce Lectures" in Trinity College, Glasgow, on the teaching of this great epistle. His mastery of the relevant literature, his sturdy independence in estimating the opinions of his predecessors in the field, and his full consideration of the problems raised by the epistle made a deep impression on my mind, and I hoped that such work from a minister in a small country town would find its way to a wider audience than any single group of college students. I am glad that this hope is being fulfilled, and that all who will may now enjoy the benefit.

Mr. Edmund Gosse tells of the thrill with which, as a boy of seven, he listened to the mighty organ-music of the words of this epistle as read by his father, but he adds that its "metaphysical ideas" only puzzled and confused him; and the same confession might come from readers far past their boyhood. And yet the difficulty is easily exaggerated. God's wisdom, as Paul says, is "many-coloured", and in that glorious variety this unknown writer stands out distinct. He has a conception of the universe which is found in Plato and far earlier than that: his conception of faith is radically different from that of Paul, and he has a doctrine of priesthood which is his own and is full of promise to the hearts of men. A priest is usually conceived of as a vicarious official, who, on men's behalf, goes where

they dare not and cannot enter and brings out to them the blessing which, by themselves, they could not secure ; but in Hebrews the Priest is one who goes in order that everyone may also go. He is the "Forerunner", the "Pioneer of Salvation", and the benefit which He secures for all men is that of free and confident access to God. These and his other distinctive ideas are all knit together in a grand poetic unity and consistency, by no means hard to understand even for the simple. It would be good for the life of the Church if this epistle were more familiarly known, and for this reason a welcome should be given to so patient and sincere an effort as this of Mr. Alexander's to reveal its treasures.

W. M. MACGREGOR,

Principal of Trinity College, Glasgow.

PREFACE

THE Epistle to the Hebrews was a favourite subject of comment with Professor Bruce, and the reading of it with him in class was to me an inspiring revelation. I trust that in some degree the chapters which follow will be found worthy of him whose name they bear. In them I have chosen to be expository. The method may be pedestrian, but it appears to me to be the surest means of reaching the truth as it is in Hebrews. High-flying gets one over a lot of ground and many difficulties; but it is down upon the ground, where the difficulties are, that the life is; and it is there that I would rather be.

I desire to express my gratitude to Principal Macgregor for his kindly interest in the book and the gracious favour of his Foreword; also to the Rev. J. Maclaren, Jedburgh, and the Rev. W. McCallum, Makerstoun, for their help with manuscript and proofs.

J.P.A.

Jedburgh, September, 1937.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE WORD OF EXHORTATION	13
*II.	THE WORLD TO COME	35
III.	LET US DRAW NEAR	56
IV.	THE SON OF GOD	79
*V.	OUR LORD JESUS	105
VI.	OVER GOD'S HOUSE	128
*VII.	A PRIEST FOR EVER	146
VIII.	DEPARTING FROM THE LIVING GOD	178
*IX.	SEEING HIM WHO IS INVISIBLE	198

* *The Bruce Lectures.*

A PRIEST FOR EVER

CHAPTER I

THE WORD OF EXHORTATION

"SUFFER the word of exhortation": thus, quietly, does the author of Hebrews describe his work (xiii. 22). In Alexandrian Judaism *paraclesis* (exhortation) was the regular term for "an appeal" to an individual to rise to the higher life of philosophy.[1] Hebrews is such an appeal—an appeal for a higher style of Christian life and thought, made with rare eloquence, and not without its touch of philosophy. It is not a treatise, a fully-rounded exposition of Christian truth, but a document called forth by an emergency, written from a special point of view, and addressed to a very definite audience. In form it is an address or sermon, like the "word of exhortation" addressed by Paul to the men of Israel and those who feared God in the synagogue at Antioch (Acts xiii. 16). In the New Testament it ranks as an epistle, and the writer calls it so; but it lacks the introductory address and salutation that are usual in such a writing, and it is only in its closing verses that we come upon anything that would suggest a letter. In spite of this, however, and in spite of its form, its title of "epistle" is not to be denied. The epistolary homily or homiletic epistle, less formal than a treatise, was now a recognised medium of instruction in many

[1] So Conybeare, quoted by Moffatt, *Hebrews*, I.C.C., p. 200.

different spheres.[1] The sermon, or sermons, in Hebrews, were written out, but never preached. The personal note prevails, and without the references at the end we should be completely in the dark. That they were added by some later scribe to bring the homily into line with other epistles, or to give it a Pauline colouring, is not to be thought of. They tell too little. The introduction may have been torn off and lost, but the likelihood is that there never was any such introduction. In the long and stately sentence with which the epistle opens we have introduction enough. There we have a true Prologue, an Overture, as in music, with hints of all the leading themes that are to follow.

The present chapter is concerned with the Writer and his friends.

I

"Great geniuses have the shortest biographies. Their cousins can tell you nothing about them. They lived in their writings, and so their home and street life was trivial and commonplace." So Emerson of Plato;[2] so also, we may add, and with greater point, of the Christian Platonist who wrote our epistle. Tradition has nothing to tell us about him, and he has surprisingly little to say about himself. He never bares his heart to us as Paul does, and the reserve seems characteristic of the man. He speaks of himself only in the final chapter. He is absent from the friends to whom he writes, but he does not tell us why or where. Apparently he is one of themselves, and a leader in their midst. He knows them intimately, and is well informed as to their present state. He writes as one in authority,

[1] Moffatt, *Int. to Lit. of N.T.*, p. 47 f. [2] *Representative Men.*

and is not afraid to speak the truth. He seeks their prayers—and this is impressive from so reticent a man; and in doing so he justifies himself. Whatever they may think of him, he believes that he has a good conscience, and is desirous of living honourably and of having their respect in all things. He urges them to pray for him that he may be restored to them the sooner. There is some hindrance, but he does not expect to be detained much longer; and when he returns he hopes to be accompanied by Timothy, "our brother", who, they will be glad to learn, has now been set at liberty (from his charge, perhaps, or from some task; not necessarily from imprisonment). With the greetings of some Italian friends, the epistle and the personal references end.

Much more about the writer can be learned from the epistle itself. He lives in his writing, and has stamped it with something of his own character and personality.

1. His style is distinctive. Scholars praise the excellence of his Greek, the balance and rhythm of his sentences, and are sure of his acquaintance with the rules of contemporary rhetoric. He has all the artist's happiness in the choice and sound of words. He loves a play upon words, and his alliterations are something more than artful. He writes, as probably he spoke, with an easy, natural, yet noble eloquence, that is felt even in a translation. There is restraint here, as in his self-revelation, for he never allows himself to be carried away. The style is the man. Even in its most impassioned moments it never quite bursts into flame. Yet underneath the restraint there is a deep spiritual glow. There is no lack of colour—he delights in pictures, and

there is no coldness. His heart is as deeply engaged in the argument as his mind, and we can feel it as we feel the throb of the engine throughout the length and breadth of the ship. When, for instance, he speaks of the sympathy of Jesus, we can be very sure of the warmth of his own. He is grave and weighty and at times severe. He cannot hide his anxiety; his friends are in great peril and he dare not spare them. Yet how tender and affectionate he can be, and how hopeful of the best.

2. His thought is as distinctive as his style. In the New Testament the epistle stands practically alone—there is none like it. And yet for all its apparent aloofness it has points of contact with every leading type of thought in the early Church. Of this we shall have abundant evidence in the chapters that follow.

The reference to Timothy suggests that the writer was quite at home in Pauline circles; and he appears to have been acquainted with the Pauline writings, as indeed he must have been if he lived in Rome or Ephesus. Paul and Hebrews have much in common in their thought of Christ as Lord and Saviour. But when they speak of the law, or of righteousness, or faith, or the covenants, or even the sacrifice of Christ, they may use the same words, as Denney says, but they do not mean the same thing. We hear nothing of "justification", or of the conflict between flesh and spirit. Paul's sign-manual, "In Christ", nowhere appears. And yet there is no conflict. The gospel in Hebrews is not "another gospel"; and Paul would have been quick to recognise and clasp hands with our author as a brother and fellow-worker though not a son in the faith.

At many points the thought of Hebrews is closer to

the thought of the primitive Church than to Paul's. Its nearest neighbours are the early chapters of Acts and the Synoptic Gospels. When we recall the author's apocalyptic outlook, his interest in the charismatic ministry and in the earthly life of Jesus, the strong Son of God, the Heir, His consecration and call, His overthrow of the devil, His faith and obedience and self-offering, we are back again in the early days of the faith. Some, indeed, are inclined to think of the speech of Stephen (Acts vii) as the epistle's true progenitor; but the verbal resemblances are too slight to build upon. Stephen's view of the history of Israel as a long crescendo of faithlessness and rebellion, reaching its climax in the crime of the crucifixion, is not Hebrews' view. Paul's speech at Antioch with its note of fulfilment is nearer. Not the "evolutionary" Hebrews, but the "revolutionary" Paul was the true heir to the rebel Stephen. There may be doubts as to the epistle's predecessor, but there can be none as to its successor. In Hebrews we have the forerunner to the Fourth Gospel. At many vital points, as we shall see, Hebrews has anticipated and apparently has influenced the thought of the great evangelist.

3. What is particularly distinctive in the writer's thought is its Alexandrianism. It has its roots in the religious philosophy of Alexandrian Judaism, as represented by Wisdom and Philo. His text-book is the Septuagint; and of this he is most securely the master, both as to style and contents. His numerous quotations and still more numerous allusions display an insight into Scripture that is remarkable and all his own.[1]

[1] cf. Westcott, Appendix.

It seems a trifle superfluous, therefore, to think of him as dependent for these upon a book of Testimonies.[1] That many of his references should in later times become the stock-in-trade of anti-Judaic controversialists is scarcely to be wondered at.

The influence of Philo is clearly marked. There are many verbal parallels to the thought of that writer, and Moffatt's pages bristle with quotations and references. In Philo, as in Hebrews, we have the contrast between the visible world, where all is type and shadow, and the unseen heavenly world where everything is real and abiding. "Let us go forth", "Let us draw near", are their watch-words. There is the same emphasis upon Worship, and Faith, and the Grace of God. In both we have the Logos, the Son of God, as Mediator and High Priest. There is some resemblance also in their treatment of Scripture. It seems, therefore, that we must posit some degree of acquaintance with the great Alexandrian. Scholars like Windisch and Scott are inclined to think of this as indirect and second-hand, "a breathing of the Philonic atmosphere"; but probably we should go further. Moffatt's verdict is advisable in its caution. "His vocabulary is drawn from a wide range of reading. . . . He was acquainted with the books of the Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, and perhaps even Philo. This last affinity is strongly marked. The more he differs from Philo in his speculative interpretation of religion, the more I feel, after a prolonged study

[1] cf. Rendel Harris, *Testimonies*, Part II, Ch. V and VI. Also D. Plooij, *Studies in the Testimony Book*, p. 31 f. Vacher Burch, the associate of R. Harris in *Testimonies*, rejects the Testimony Book as a source, and thinks of the author as controlled in his choice by the Synagogue Lectionary (cf. his *Ep. to the Hebrews*, p 53 f.)—an unnecessary limitation.

of Philo, that our author had probably read some of his works; it is not easy to avoid the conclusion that his acquaintance with the Hellenistic Judaism of Alexandria included an acquaintance with Philo's writings. However this may be, the terminology of the Wisdom literature was as familiar to this early Christian *didaskalos* as to the author of James."[1] There is acquaintanceship, therefore, and resemblance in their mode of thought, but nothing more. Hebrews is no Philonist; there is no dependence, and the differences between the two writers far outgo the resemblances. In Hebrews there are no abstract ideas as in Philo, no mystic rapture, no union with the Divine. History and Scripture are not dissolved in allegory. Faith is a great deal more than "the queen of the virtues", and the Logos than the divine Reason. "In the Philonic Logos," says Mackintosh,[2] "philosophy had, as it were, been dreaming of a Saviour." In Hebrews we have the Son of God in the days of His flesh—a truth the learned Philo never knew—and that makes all the difference. "Philo in comparison with Hebrews is as water unto wine."

4. Dr. Edwyn Bevan thinks it a mistake to take Philo as a philosopher. "The essentially philosophic interest in Plato," he says, "the desire to find a theory of the universe which can stand the scrutiny of rigidly logical reason, is not Philo's interest. He is a religious preacher. He uses philosophical terms and ideas for a homiletic purpose. . . . The life of the soul, the hindrances which prevent its reaching the beatific vision, the wrong directions in which it may so easily turn—that is Philo's province. He is a spiritual

[1] *Hebrews*, p. lxi. [2] *The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 86.

director."[1] This estimate of Dr. Bevan's may be taken, word for word, as true of the writer of Hebrews. He has a fondness for philosophic terms (cf. Moffatt, p. lxi), but he cannot for that reason be termed a philosopher. And yet he has the philosophic mind. He likes to think things together and to think them out. His work is a carefully ordered artistic whole. He sees the end from the beginning; and though he sometimes steps aside for a moment from the strict line of argument, his digressions are always enriching; and he never forgets, as Paul so frequently and delightfully does, to return to his point of departure. He thinks in terms of an end (telos). The Son, the sanctified, the spirits of just men, Judaism, the patriarchs, the law, the tabernacle and its sacrifices, men's thought, conscience, faith and unbelief have all to be carried to their true and appointed end, have all to be made perfect. He might be described as a natural teleologist, and this teleology of his brings him ultimately to the same point as the philosopher, to a vision of the universe redeemed and perfected in Christ, with divine sacrificial love as its creative and governing principle (i. 1–3). His eschatology is just thorough-going soteriology, salvation made perfect, salvation "unto the uttermost".

Primarily he is a *Preacher*, rather than a philosopher or theologian. As it stands, the epistle has the appearance of a series of sermons or sermon-notes. Some of these, if taken out of their context, could stand upon their own feet, and could quite well have been delivered in church. Not that Hebrews is to be taken as the refurbishing of the contents of a preacher's drawer. Professor

[1] Essay on "Hellenistic Judaism," in *The Legacy of Israel*, p. 45.

C. H. Dodd has suggested that Paul could on occasion make use of old material.[1] But what was permissible for the apostle in writing to strangers like the Romans, would not serve with our author in time of crisis for well-known friends. And when we see how intimately the details of each part are adapted to the situation of the readers, and how all the parts are bound into a unity by the presentation of the great High Priest, it is difficult to think of the epistle as sermons preached elsewhere and then sent home with a covering note. The material we may take as fresh, but handled by the writer as it would have been had he been face to face with his people in the flesh.

The homiletic habit seems to be a second nature to him. Such phrases as "The world to come whereof we speak" (ii. 5), "Of which we cannot now speak particularly" (ix. 5), "And what shall I more say" (xi. 32), tell of a public habit that has become literary. He has the preacher's manner of presenting and dealing with a subject. He never works it out to the full as in a treatise; nor does he give us his whole mind on any topic, not even on the sacrifice of Christ. He makes his point: sometimes he returns to it from a different angle; but the theme is never exhausted: there is always something left over for the morrow. He has a fine eye for texts, and a singular insight, as Davidson points out, not only into the meaning of the texts in themselves, but into the meaning which the context gives them.[2] Often he seizes upon a word or phrase, such as To-day, My Rest, the order of Melchizedek, examines it, presses it, returns to it again and again, as if loth to part with

[1] The reference is to Romans ix-xi; cf. his commentary, p. xxx.
[2] *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 248.

it until he has extracted its last particle of meaning. He has his favourite refrains and catch-words—Draw near, Hold fast, By faith, Consider, Look. In his exegesis he is fanciful and free, and like all good preachers more intent upon the underlying spiritual meaning than the literal. He allegorises, but not after the manner of Philo. In Philo everything is resolved into abstract ideas, qualities and faculties of the mind. Not so with Hebrews. His method is Rabbinical (so Bevan and Scott), as in the *midrash* of the synagogue. We might even call it Scriptural. For in his spiritualising of "the Rest" Hebrews simply follows the lead of the prophets and psalmists, and in his treatment of Melchizedek there is nothing more fanciful or daring than the imagination of the psalm (cx) from which he sets out. It is in the Psalter that he finds his chief inspiration: for illustrations he goes to the Pentateuch. All things there—patriarchs, land, tabernacle, priests, sacrifices—are but types and symbols of higher realities. Earth is

> "but the shadow of heaven, and things therein
> Each to other like more than on earth is thought."[1]

His thought seems to move heavenwards of itself—from the symbol to the reality, from things seen and temporal to the unseen and eternal, from the manhood in Christ to His Godhead, from the days of His flesh to the days, before and after, by the throne.

And yet, while heart and brain move there his feet stay here. For all his idealism he never loses touch with earth. He is *Pastor* as much as preacher. As a preacher he is quiet and compelling; never forcing his

[1] *Paradise Lost*, v, 571.

personality upon his hearers, but trusting his message and the power of the truth to convince and inspire. As pastor he is all heart, all concern for the souls of his people. While he writes his eye is continually upon them. He knows them intimately, individually: their history in the past; their circumstances, difficulties, and temptations in the present. How well, too, does he know the windings of the human heart; its deceitfulness and shame, as well as its glories and heroisms. Philo has been called "the Psychologist of Faith", but on that point and on many others he is more than matched by Hebrews—a sure diviner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. His friends are in great danger; he is absent from them, and though he is returning soon he cannot wait to deal with the matter in person and face to face. The situation is too critical, and so he writes. He loves them, fears for them, yet trusts in them. He reasons with them, pleads with them, and at the last he prays for them. The epistle closes with a shepherd's prayer—a true Pastoral!

5. As for his name—who can tell? It has been irretrievably lost. We have many guesses—Barnabas, Luke, Apollos, Aquila and Priscilla—but no certainty. Something can be said for each of them, but more against. It does not matter. We can see him clearly; "conjecture of the worker by the work". Scholar; stylist; orator; preacher; bible student; prince of idealists; first of Christian Platonists; symbolist and sacramental artist; other-worldly mystic; no Philonist or Paulinist; a Primitive rather, with a touch of modernism; a brave leader; a sound Churchman, not too high; a deeply religious soul; above all a great-hearted lover

of Jesus. Why, we know the man thoroughly. What use, then, in hunting old trails for the sake of a name?

II

1. The epistle is addressed to a definite circle of readers. For the beginnings of their faith they were indebted to the preaching of certain disciples who had been hearers of the Lord himself, and whose ministry had been marked by signal manifestations of divine power, in signs, wonders, miracles, and distributions of the Holy Spirit (ii. 3). Their conversion is described as an "enlightenment", a "receiving of the knowledge of the truth"; and the depth and reality of their Christian profession is further witnessed to by such expressions as "tasting the heavenly gift", "tasting the good word of God and the powers of the world to come", and in being made "partakers of Christ and of the Holy Ghost" (iii. 14, vi. 4, x. 32).

They had now been Christians for some time. The community had a history behind it. Their original leaders had passed away, leaving them a noble example of faith and heroism. The writer recalls the former days, when after their enlightenment (not necessarily immediately afterwards) they endured a great fight of afflictions—taunt and sneer and petty annoyance, social ostracism, mob-rioting, loss of goods, imprisonment. They had taken this with cheerfulness, secure in the knowledge that they had "better possessions" than those of earth. The writer dwells with some degree of pride upon their glad fearlessness, their glorying in their hope, their sympathy with the sufferers, and their ministry of love towards the saints (iii. 6, x. 32f.).

A change, however, has come over the spirit of the community in the course of the years. The former confidence and rejoicing have gone. Coldness has set in and a hardening of the heart. They are losing interest in their faith, in the great salvation. They have become dull of hearing, and have made but little progress in their understanding of Christian truth. They are troubled by the sufferings and death of Jesus; and their friend, the writer, expects to have some difficulty in making them understand his doctrine of the Priesthood of Christ. In addition they have been toying with outside novelties—teachings strange and divers. Disaffection has set in, and they are not at peace amongst themselves or with their leaders. And now a new peril is rising up. Once again they are being threatened by persecution. The present members have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin; "not yet", but any day they may be called upon to do so, to make the last sacrifice; and some of them, in consequence, are forsaking their gatherings for worship, and leaving their brethren in the lurch.

All this makes the writer afraid. He fears for their loyalty. It seems to him that all unconsciously they are drifting away from the faith, drifting not to any other form of belief, old or new, but to utter unbelief and irreligion, apostatising from the living God, drawing back unto perdition. That is the fear which haunts his heart and forces him to write.

He rallies them on their slackness. They have been dwelling too long amid the rudiments of the faith, and must move on to "perfection". Christianity was far more glorious than they had supposed it to be, and there

were reaches of truth that they had never explored. They must think. They must think of one another to provoke one another to love and good works. They must think of their past, of the faith of their martyred leaders and the immortals of Hebrew story. Above all they must consider Jesus, who through His sufferings and death, and not in spite of them, was made Lord and Head and High Priest over the House of God. The supreme end which religion seeks to attain is full and unhindered fellowship with God. Well, says our author, think of Jesus as the great High Priest, who has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and has thereby opened a new and living way by which we can draw nigh unto God. There you touch the absolute: beyond that you cannot go. "The Finality of Jesus for Faith"—that is the point of the epistle; an impassioned plea for the reconsideration of Christianity from this higher point of view.

2. But little is said of the formal worship and organisation of the community. The epistle is not a directory, and there was no necessity for the writer to discuss such matters. Some incidental references, however, are interesting and instructive.

(*a*) The writer speaks of "the assembling of ourselves together" (x. 25). They had their own place of meeting, to which they resorted "daily" for mutual assistance and edification, and for social and religious fellowship (iii. 13). It is probable that we should think of them as a congregation attached to some household in a city or district where there were other gatherings of Christians (cf. x. 25, xiii. 24). As Zahn has pointed out,[1] the whole body of Christians in a province or

[1] *Introduction to the N.T.* 2 : 349.

large city could hardly have been so homogeneous as regards their condition of faith and their frame of mind as the readers of Hebrews are everywhere represented. The household hypothesis also best explains the absence of the usual address, and the loss of the author's name. An epistle addressed to such a group of Christians could not carry the name of the locality in which they dwelt (cf. " to all that be in Rome ", or " to the Church of God which is at Corinth "). Bearing, as it did, so directly and intimately upon the conditions in a particular congregation, the epistle would be slow to make its way in the general community. Its worth and importance would be of very gradual recognition, and the author's name might easily be forgotten, more especially as he was not of apostolic rank. There is also the possibility that with the growth of the Church the congregation was absorbed in a larger community (Moffatt), for whom the personality of the author had not the same importance. The house-church disappeared, and with it the author's name and every trace of the epistle's origin.

(*b*) From the injunctions " Obey your leaders ", " Salute *all* your leaders and *all* the saints " (xiii, 17, 24), we may gather that while they had leaders of their own, there were others, leaders of the whole Church, to whom they also owed allegiance. These leaders, amongst whom the writer is to be numbered, were the men " who spoke to them the Word of God " (xiii. 7), and " who watched for their souls " (xiii. 17); men of spiritual vision, with the power of inspired thought and utterance, prophets and teachers, the natural leaders in worship. From this they derived their authority, an authority more personal than official. Leadership was

not an "office". The members are to discharge the same functions as the leaders. They are to exhort one another daily (iii. 13), to take oversight (episkopountes) lest anyone fail of the grace of God (xii. 15); and the only disciplinary power that is mentioned is brotherly love (cf. Ch. III, p. 75f).

(*c*) From the references to the "confession" it has been argued that "there was now a fixed body of doctrine and practice on which all members of the Church were agreed".[1] But this is more than doubtful. The references are three in number. In the first, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our Confession" (iii. 1), "our confession" is simply a synonym for "our religion". In the others the readers are asked to hold fast the confession of their faith and hope (iv. 14, x. 23). Again the reference is perfectly general, an appeal for continuance in their profession of the Christian faith. They had made profession of their faith in Jesus as Lord at baptism, but on that point, as we shall see, there were difficulties. The writer speaks of "the beginnings of the doctrine of Christ"—teachings given to catechumens—which the readers are urged to leave behind (vi. 1). Some have found in these teachings the rudiments of a creed; but out of such a mixture—spiritual conditions, ceremonial observances, eschatological beliefs—no creed was ever born. In those days creeds, however rudimentary, were not made to be left behind. The readers are warned against certain novel doctrines, but these are not met by any reference to a standard of orthodoxy. Finally, in Hebrews we have the first definite effort to

[1] E. F. Scott, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, pp. 76, 171.

relate the earthly life of Jesus to His heavenly glory. Clearly, then, doctrine was still in a fluid condition and in its formative period. We are still very far from the definiteness of a creed or fixed body of doctrine.

(*d*) In a writing which thinks so directly of religion as the soul's approach to God in worship some definite reference to the Sacraments might have been expected. But there is nothing that is significant. Baptism is referred to in the phrase "having your bodies washed in pure water" (x. 22), and no doubt it had a place in the teaching regarding "Washings" (vi. 2). In the second century "enlightenment" came to be used as a technical term for baptism, and it may be so here (x. 32). No mention is made of the Eucharist, though we may think of its observance as the natural climax of "the sacrifice of praise" (xiii. 15). In the saying, "We have an altar of which the worshippers have no right to eat" (xiii. 10) a reference has been found to a realistic or materialistic eating of the Lord's body in the Eucharist. But this requires the identification of the "altar" with the Lord's Table, and that is not possible within the symbolism of Hebrews. The altar belongs to the tabernacle, and the tabernacle is in heaven.

Though the writer has little or nothing to say about sacraments it is not at all necessary to conclude that for him they had no vital importance, or that his mind was naturally averse to mysticism and to sacramental ideas (Scott). So large an inference is unwarranted. The truth is that he had no occasion or necessity to refer to them. The trouble with which he had to deal was in no way connected with sacraments. It did not

call for a conspectus either of Christian doctrine or of Christian worship. As for mysticism or the lack of it, his whole epistle is a protest against formalism and an appeal for a worship from the heart—"Let us draw near with a true heart and in full assurance of faith"—and such heart-worship is of the very essence of evangelical mysticism. In his sense of the nearness and immanence of the transcendent world, his intuitive and immediate certainty of things unseen, his quest for the True, the ultimate Reality, the call to go forth from the camp of the visible world, the pilgrimage to the Celestial City and the Rest of God we have notes which have characterised the mystical piety of all ages.[1]

3. Were these first readers of the epistle Jews or were they Gentiles? The point has been keenly canvassed and has to be settled—if settled it can be—by inference, for the writer does not tell. He addresses his friends simply as Christians, quite irrespective of race. For him there is neither Jew nor Gentile.

(*a*) From the argument as a whole, the Jewishness of its thought and its dependence upon the old Testament, it has very generally been assumed that they were of Jewish extraction. The conclusion, however, is not too sure. For the same features are to be observed in epistles addressed to churches predominantly Gentile in origin, such as Galatians, Corinthians, Romans. The Old Testament was now a Christian book—Paul could say to Gentiles: These things were written for *our* learning and admonition (Rom. xv. 4; 1 Cor. ix. 10, x. 11), and Gentile Christians were acquainted with its contents

[1] cf. E. Underhill, *Mysticism*, Ch. V and VI. Also Moffatt, p. liv.

and could understand its teaching as well as their Jewish brethren or any Gentile of to-day. Many of them had entered the Church via the Synagogue. They were "God-fearers", attracted to Judaism by its lofty monotheism and pure morality; and amongst them Christianity found some of its best and earliest converts. They had lived face to face with a sacrificial worship and knew what it meant; and since our author never refers to the Temple or its worship, but argues entirely from the ritual of the Tabernacle as laid down in the law-books, they were on the same level so far as understanding went as the Jews, many of whom had never seen the Temple, or a priest or a sacrifice. The author's argument is that all such rites, Jewish or Pagan, have little profit. The true cultus is not to be found on earth at all. The only real cultus is the heavenly—all else is shadow—where Jesus with His self-offering is an ever-living High Priest, full of sympathy and understanding, and able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. One did not require to be a Jew to appreciate that point. We cannot argue from the Jewishness of the thought of the epistle to the Jewishness of its readers. Some stress has been laid upon the phrase "the seed of Abraham" (ii. 16), as proving their Jewish descent; but Paul again supplies the corrective, for he uses the same phrase of the Gentile Christians of Galatia (iii. 7, 29). If it be taken literally then we are committed to the impossible position that Jesus came to succour Jews only.

(*b*) On the other side we have the following. The instruction given to catechumens on such points as washings, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the

dead and eternal judgment (vi. 2), is more naturally referred to Gentiles than to Jews. The warning against loose living consequent upon a light esteem of the marriage relationship (xiii. 4) points in the same direction. Marriage was so highly esteemed amongst the Jews that an admonition to hold it in honour is at least surprising as addressed to them. Similarly with the reference to "divers and strange doctrines" and to "meats" (xiii. 9). That is suggestive of participation in Pagan feasts rather than Jewish. On this point see further Chapter VIII, page 186f.

(*c*) There may have been Jewish Christians amongst them, but the prevailing complexion of the community seems to have been Gentile. We do not get the impression of a mixed community. One point is clear. The members are all charged with the same faults and are praised and blamed without distinction. They all have to meet the same temptations; the warnings are addressed to all alike; and all are moving in the same direction. There is no hint of any return to Judaism or for that matter to Paganism. What the writer fears is something much worse, something really bad, a departing from the living God, a drawing back unto perdition, not quite the same thing as Judaism. It is notable that writers like Zahn, Rendall, G. Milligan, T. H. Robinson and Mackinnon, who hold by the Jewish origin of the readers, will not hear of any reversion to Judaism.

4. Where did they live, and from whence was the letter written? The title—To the Hebrews—does not help us; it did not come from the author, and as an address it is impossible. There are only two points from which we can proceed to an answer—the references

to Italy and to Timothy (xiii. 23, 24), and unfortunately neither is perfectly clear. "They of Italy salute you" may mean that the writer is in Italy, and that he sends the greetings of the Christians of Italy to his friends at home; or it may refer to a group of Italian Christians who like the writer are resident abroad, and send their salutations to their fellow-countrymen in Italy. Either way is possible. But in the former case we should have expected some such phrase as "*All* they of Italy", or "the Churches of Italy". Greetings from a whole country are less natural than from a definite community or locality. The latter reading has analogies elsewhere, and should be preferred. In which case the letter was written to Italy; and if to Italy, then most certainly to Rome.

The Roman destination is fully supported by what we have already learned concerning the community, and by other considerations. Even in Paul's time the Roman Church was a large body, with many congregations or household churches. It was mainly Gentile (Rom. i. 13), and noted for its generosity and its discipline (cf. Heb. vi. 10, xiii. 17). It had passed through the fire under Nero. Clement speaks of the Neronic martyrs as "a great multitude" (vi. 1), and amongst them would be numbered the early leaders of our special community. The Church was not a Pauline foundation (cf. Heb. ii. 3); and Roman theology, like that of Hebrews, was not particularly Pauline. The epistle was well known in the Church. The Roman Clement is the first to quote from it (A.D. 95), and the Roman Hermas the first to question the rigour of its teaching (A.D. 100).[1] Finally, the Roman tradition was

[1] For the date cf. Streeter, *The Primitive Church*, p. 204.

always in favour of the epistle's anonymity and its non-Pauline authorship. The case for Rome is a strong one.

For the place of origin we have not far to seek. The writer is expecting to be joined by Timothy, and there is no place where they were more likely to meet than in Timothy's own diocese of Ephesus. That Timothy should visit Rome is not at all strange. Paul's well-loved son in the faith had been with him there during his imprisonment, and was well known to the brethren. Written, then, from Ephesus to Rome; and if we set it down about the year A.D. 85, when the severities under Domitian were beginning to be felt, we shall not be far wrong.

Some indication may be given of the line of thought to be taken in the chapters that follow. The outstanding feature of the epistle is its presentation of the Person of Christ. That portrait is set in a framework of ideas, which must be considered first of all. To this, two chapters are given—the first, dealing with what may be described as the philosophy of the author, "The World to Come"; the second, with his fundamental conception of religion, "Let us Draw Near". Then we come to the portrait itself—four chapters. First, as Jesus is seen to be in Himself, "The Son of God"; then as He is seen in His work—Jesus, as "Lord", as "Over God's House", and finally, as "A Priest for Ever". The two last chapters are devoted to a discussion of (1) the threatened apostasy in the little community—"Departing from the Living God", and (2) the author's glowing conception of Faith—"Seeing Him who is Invisible."

CHAPTER II

THE WORLD TO COME

"THE World to Come, whereof we speak" (ii. 5)—the subject which the writer has in hand at the moment in the development of his argument, but far more the subject which he has at heart all through the epistle. It lends a glow to all his thought.

As it stands the phrase looks definitely towards the future. It points to the new divine order which is to be manifested at the Parousia, when Christ shall appear the second time, apart from sin, unto salvation (ix. 28). This, however, does not exhaust its meaning. There is an element of paradox in the conception; for the world to come has a present existence, and its "powers" are continually making themselves felt in our present life (vi. 5). Above all it refers to the heavenly world of eternal life and reality, and it is this aspect more than any other that holds the interest of the writer. This, for him, is the "true" world—all else is mainly shadow. To draw near to it in worship and in faith, to have our lives subdued and penetrated and redeemed by its heavenly gifts and powers, and ultimately to become incorporate with its life—this, for our author, is the heart and soul of the Christian religion and the Christian salvation. Christianity is otherworldly all the way through. In passing we may note how exactly parallel the conception is to that of the Kingdom of God in the Gospels.

1. *Contrasts*

The writer develops his thought by way of contrast, or by a series of contrasts between our present world and the World to Come.

1. There is first of all the visible, material, tangible world, and over against it the unseen Heavenly World. The old Biblical conception of Heaven as the source of all life and blessedness is absolutely fundamental to the writer's vision. Other elements may find a place in it, but they are never permitted to usurp the primacy of the heavenly. The heavenly "things", the heavenly "calling", the heavenly "gifts", the heavenly "country", the heavenly "Jerusalem" are the most blessed and enduring of realities.

2. Then there is the contrast between the transient and temporal, and what is enduring and eternal. The world of our pilgrimage, though the work of God's hands, is strictly a passing world. Its doom is writ; and not by any arbitrary fiat, but in the very nature of things. There can be no permanence, our author holds, in "things made" (xii. 27). "Thou, Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest" (i. 10).

On the other hand the World to Come is the Eternal World—the Kingdom that cannot be shaken, the Rest that remaineth, the City that abideth. Everything connected with it shares in its eternity. It is the sphere of eternal salvation (v. 9), eternal judgment (vi. 2), eternal redemption (ix. 12), eternal spirit (ix. 14), the eternal

inheritance (ix. 15), and the eternal covenant (xiii. 20). In such connections "eternal" means something more than merely "everlasting" or "timeless". It certainly includes time and duration, yet as certainly transcends them. What it carries is the sense of absoluteness and finality. In these matters there is nothing beyond, nothing more to be said or done. In Christianity we are dealing with ultimates.

3. Over against the present world of types and shadows there stands the world of the True or the Real. Our world of sense and time—described as the "phenomenal" in xi. 3—is only a poor and imperfect copy of the real and eternal world.

Under this head we come upon the writer's fundamental criticism of Judaism. Judaism and its ordinances belong to the shadow world. Its tabernacle was a "worldly sanctuary", "of this creation", "made with hands" (ix. 1, 11, 14), and built according to a "pattern" revealed to Moses in the mount (viii. 5). In reality, however, the tabernacle with its worship was very far from being a perfect reproduction of the divine ideal. It did not give the "very image", but only a shadowy outline of things in heaven (x. 1). The holy places were merely "figures" of the true (the reality, ix. 24). The Law made nothing perfect, brought nothing to its goal (vii. 19). Its sacrifices could never make the comers thereunto perfect (x. 1). In Judaism, therefore, we are never dealing with the realities of religion at first hand, but only with types, copies, shadows, dim and wavering and insubstantial.

In the author's opinion, however, the system was never meant to be final. The first tabernacle was only

a figure for the time then present. Everything connected with it was temporary, provisional—carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation under the New Covenant (ix. 9, 10). The types and copies were prophetic, and pointed to a reality beyond themselves. The Law was a shadow of good things to come (x. 1), that found its perfecting in Christ.

Obviously this is not the whole truth about Judaism. The author is prevented by his antithetical method from doing perfect justice to that system. It was not all dumb show. Instruction and guidance were given by the priests, and surely not always without sympathy and understanding. There was the voice of confession and of prayer and of thanksgiving. The symbolism itself was vocal, was felt and understood, just as the symbolism of the Lord's Supper is felt and understood by us without the noise of words. Under the Law there were devout souls who felt that it was good to draw near to God and did draw near, who were able to pierce the veil of symbolism and find communion with God. But at its best the path was round about and dimly lit; for them "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest".

Here, on earth, then, the world of types and shadows; but there in heaven, the order of eternal reality—"on the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round". Heaven is the sphere of the "True", the spiritual reality of which the symbols speak. To it belongs the "true" tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man. Or rather, heaven itself is the sanctuary, the great and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands. There is no temple there; but Jesus is there,

a minister of the sanctuary; and because He continueth ever He hath an unchangeable priesthood. And to this world we must draw near with a "true" heart and in full assurance of faith.

Behind this contrast there lay the conception of earthly and heavenly counterparts; a doctrine much older than Judaism, older, too, than Platonism and not confined to either of them. Hebrews found it in his bible, in Exodus (xxv. 9, 40) which he quotes, in Numbers (viii. 4), in Ezekiel (xliii. 10–11), in 1 Chronicles (xxviii. 11–20) and in Wisdom (ix. 8). Ultimately, no doubt, as we have it in Hebrews it runs back through Alexandrian Judaism, that great absorbent of Greek thought, to the Platonic World of Ideas.

Of these "Ideas" it has been said that "they constitute a world of transcendental models or archetypes, the truly existent reality corresponding to all our dreams of perfection, in the spheres alike of nature, art, morality and knowledge. Plato's religion consists in the passionate uplifting of the mind towards this realm of perfection, to which the soul in her true nature is akin".[1] Much the same may be said of the religion of the writer of Hebrews. For him, however, the higher world to which he draws near and in which he finds his life is not the world of the Ideal. His Platonism does not go very deep. It does not touch the substance of his thought. That remains stubbornly Jewish and Christian. All that he has done is to avail himself of a mode of thought which he found ready to his hand in the current philosophy of the day, and to fill it with his own content, just as modern Christians do with the

[1] Adam, *Religious Teachers of Greece*, p. 430.

philosophy of Values. Consequently, in Hebrews the true world is never thought of abstractly, but concretely as the Kingdom which cannot be moved, the better Country, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the true land of Promise, the inheritance of the saints and their everlasting Rest.

Professor Ernest Scott will have it that in Hebrews there are two strains of thought—one, of the Age to Come (Parousia and Consummation) derived from Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic; the other of the Higher World of Reality, drawn from Greek Idealism. These two strains, he holds, are never and can never be properly blended. The author does his best to be loyal to the old apocalyptic tradition; but his real affinity is with the second of these strains, and in spite of himself he can never bring them into harmony. The conception of the two Ages is displaced by that of the two Worlds. The primitive belief is transposed from the category of time to that of place. Instead of looking forward he looks upward to a higher realm of perfection. Accordingly with the supersession of the Jewish strain the hope of the Parousia takes quite a secondary place—there is indeed no room for it in the writer's essential thought. Not only does the Parousia lose its original significance, but the whole emphasis is shifted from a salvation in the future to one that is effected here and now.[1]

This conclusion, however, is altogether too sweeping. We shall come to the Parousia and Salvation presently: meanwhile our concern is with the Higher World. The idea of a world of enduring reality was not something new in Jewish or Christian thought. It was always

[1] *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 109 f.

present in the thought of Heaven and of the Kingdom of Heaven. In the apocalyptic tradition the "*Age* to come" was never thought of apart from the higher or heavenly *World*. It had its existence there, prepared, like the Kingdom in the Gospel, from the foundation of the world; ready, like the salvation in 1 Peter, to be revealed in the last time. The category of place was as essential to it as that of time. They require, indeed, to be thought of together, just as moderns speak not only of "space" and "time" but of "Space-Time". ("World-Age" would be the best translation.) No displacement or transposition from one to the other was necessary. It was as natural as it was inevitable that Christians should look upward as well as forward. When an early disciple prayed "Thy Kingdom come", or a Pauline convert cried out "Maranatha", was there no upward lift of the heart? Surely! Salvation is from above. Hebrews had not to go to school with the Greeks for that.

As for the reality of that higher world we can only speak of it as fundamentally Personal. It is easy to talk vaguely of Reality; but "outside of spirit", we are assured on good authority, "there is not and there cannot be any reality, and the more that anything is spiritual, so much the more is it veritably real".[1] And for Hebrews the "real" world is the World of Spirits; of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, of the spirits of just men made perfect, and of those spirits in divine service called angels. In that eternal world, God "the Father of Spirits" has His throne, the throne of Grace. He is the living God, with a living Word, quick and power-

[1] F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 552, the final sentence.

ful and creative, supreme in Nature and in Grace. There, too, Jesus is Lord, by reason of His victory over him that had the power of death. From it He came to do God's will on earth through sacrifice, and thither He returned as our High Priest and Intercessor. Everything in that world is dominated by the figure of the great High Priest who took to heaven a human name and human brow, who is our Kinsman now. If there is anything in heaven or on earth more real than the sacrificial love and living sympathy of Jesus, Hebrews does not know of it. That divine love is for him the last reality of all.

To this most "real" of worlds, this world of majesty and holiness, of grace and forgiveness, of power and victory, of sympathy and salvation, of final bliss and perfection, we as Christians are come (xii. 22). As the writer of Hebrews stands before it what grips his heart and mind is first of all its *Nearness and Accessibility*. It is not shut off from us by any impenetrable veil. The way stands open, the new and living way inaugurated by Jesus through his flesh. The last barrier is down, and we can draw near in that mingled love and trust and wonder and awe which is Worship. (2) *Its Graciousness*. Here is no dread. It is not "wholly" other, but a friendly world; the world of atonement and forgiveness, of sympathy and understanding and help. There we can obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (3) *Its Supernaturalness*. And supernatural not merely as lifted above nature, transcendent in its majesty and holiness; but as coming down into the sphere of the natural, and penetrating and transforming the whole life of man by its heavenly powers and gifts.

II. *Contacts*

There are two worlds then, and man with a footing in both. To look at him he appears to be as firmly rooted in Nature, as much a part of its order, as anything else in it. And yet we see him visited by obstinate questionings of sense and outward things, always tormented by a vision of some unearthly good, a devotion to something afar from the sphere of his sorrow. So that his life here becomes "a blundering search" for a blessedness which constantly eludes his grasp, and whose secret is never fully revealed.

There is something exceedingly strange in this search, "this instinct for the transcendent" on the part of a creature of sense and time. "No one," says Miss Underhill, "has ever explained why or how a merely physical universe should or could breed these persistently other-worldly cravings and evolve these strange interminglings of spirit with sense: or how it is that a world littered with the unpromising products of primitive credulity, should yet be able to produce—either with or without their assistance—the moral splendour and heroic actions of the saints."[1] Indeed from our side of the border-line, and from the side of naturalism, there is no explanation that satisfies. Psychology when it speaks of "Fantasy" and "Projection" is only describing mechanism. The cravings, the search, are only explicable on the supposition that there are two worlds, and that man is a citizen of both. They are the promptings of another world, the welling-

[1] *Man and the Supernatural*, p. 5.

up in man of a life which owes no full allegiance to earth or sun.

> "Our destiny, our being's heart and home
> Is with infinitude, and only there;
> With hope it is, hope that can never die,
> Effort and expectation and desire,
> And something evermore about to be."

"They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country". They confess that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, that here they have no continuing city, but seek one which is to come (xi. 13, xiii. 14).

According to Hebrews this upward movement of the soul in search of blessedness is met by a corresponding movement from the invisible world, in which the former finds its source and its satisfaction. The heavenly world takes the initiative: Jerusalem above is the mother of it all. That world is no mere over-arching sky, no mere foil or background to this earth. It is not static, but dynamic—an active world that tells on this with all its powers. It does not merely confront, but invades the present order, penetrating and interfusing the life of man with its own supernatural quality, and thus making communion and fellowship possible. "The true heavenly things of which it consists thrust themselves forward", says Davidson, "on to this bank and shoal of time"—"they project themselves into the present life like headlands of a new world into the ocean", or "like the laws of a new world coming in to cross and by and by to supersede those of this world".[1]

Of this double movement the fullest picture is given in the famous eleventh chapter. The heroes and heroines

[1] *Essays*, p. 317. *Hebrews*, pp. 82 and 121.

of faith are all moved by other-worldly powers. We see them responding to the heavenly calling, receiving the heavenly gifts, obeying the heavenly vision, counting this world well lost for the sake of enduring possessions in heaven. They seek, they suffer, they endure, they work miracles and subdue kingdoms, all by virtue of its supernatural might and indwelling. "Through faith," it is said; but by a faith that is born and nourished and continually reborn through contact with that higher world, called forth and met by ever new inpourings from above.

For the Christians to whom the epistle is addressed this was far from being a matter of past history. The community had its own experience of these other-worldly powers. "The great salvation which *at the first* began to be proclaimed by the Lord had been confirmed to them by those who heard Him; God also bearing them witness, by signs and wonders and divers miraculous powers and by distributions of the Holy Spirit according to His will" (ii. 3–4).

"*At the first*" carries us back to the beginnings of Christianity, to our Lord and that great swelling-in of heaven, of which we speak as the Incarnation. It also takes us back to the beginnings of Gospel history and to the Synoptic records of the preaching and the healings and the forgiveness of sins. There also the higher world was breaking in. "If I, by the Spirit of God, cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you." The signs, wonders, powers and distributions of the Holy Spirit link themselves up with the "Charismata" of the Pauline churches.

All through its history the community had such witnessings of the Unseen. They had been made

"partakers of a heavenly calling" (iii. 1), "partakers of Christ" (iii. 14), "partakers of the Holy Spirit" (vi. 4). They had "received the knowledge of the truth" (x. 26), had been "enlightened" (x. 32) and had tasted of the heavenly gift, the good word of God and the powers of the world to come (vi. 4–5). Behind these phrases lay deep, thrilling, redemptive experiences. "Enlightenment" had practically become the technical term for conversion and the confession of their faith at baptism. "Participation" was a Platonic term—a thing is beautiful because it "partakes" of beauty, because of the "presence" (parousia) in it of the ideal Beauty.[1] But how different its content in Hebrews—a sharing in the rich store of blessings provided for the household of God by its great Head. As for the "Powers"—Plato had his "Ideas" (Robert Bridges calls them "Influences", *Testament of Beauty* 2 : 834), and Philo his "Powers", five of them, impersonal attendants upon the impersonal Logos. "But", says Kennedy, "his *speculative* effort to bring God into touch with the world of men through λόγος or δυνάμεις or ἄγγελοι is no more successful than that of his revered master Plato, so vastly his superior in constructive intellectual power, to relate his Ideas to the realm of actual experience."[2] On the other hand these Christians had "tasted", had direct personal experience of the powers of the world to come; of the miracles, the word of God in its "goodness" and its "sharpness", God's grace, and help and forgiveness; no one of them a self-acting power, but all of them mediated

[1] cf. Adam, *Religious Teachers of Greece*, p. 436 f.

[2] *Philo's Contribution to Religion*, p. 6. In Col. i. 16 and Eph. i. 21. "Powers" are included in the angelic hierarchy; cf. also Mark xiii. 25.

through the Holy Spirit, or through Christ and His servants, and so in the last resort personal, spiritual and redemptive. By these and many other infallible signs they were assured of the breaking in of the divine and heavenly order and of its presence in their midst. They were living, morally and spiritually, in a supernatural environment. The World to Come, the Kingdom of God was in their midst. It had come to them not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

This penetration of the natural by the supernatural is the "pivot" (Moffatt, p. 21) on which the whole conception of the World to Come turns.[1] From experiences such as these, the readers of the epistle assuredly gathered that their life here was joined to a larger continent of heavenly life and grace, from which at present they seemed cut off by the sea of time. Soon, however, their island life would be ended. For from the same experiences there sprang the conviction that they were living in the last times. The old order was changing, yielding place to new. In a little, a very little while, the Coming One would come and would not tarry. What could these swellings-in of heaven, these "bright shoots of everlastingness" be but the avant-couriers of the King, heralding His coming and the final consummation?

III. *Consummation*

There are three great moments in the writer's outlook on the Last Things: the Second Advent, the Judgment, and the Manifestation of the Eternal King-

[1] Of all this side of things Prof. Scott says not a word, and consequently his whole presentation is out of focus.

dom; and these are thought of together as parts of one great inclusive and conclusive movement in redemption.

1. The writer looks for another invasion from above, a final breaking in of the eternal world in its fullness upon this sphere of temporal things, a "breaking in" which involves a "taking up" into the life of heaven. "But now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself . . . and unto them that look for Him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (ix. 26–28). Thus, quietly and soberly, without any of the pomp and circumstance of apocalyptic, does the writer describe the bringing in of the final salvation.

In this brief but pregnant summary there is more than meets the eye, and in it we may find an answer to the points raised by Prof. Scott. On the surface there does appear to be some want of harmony between the conception of the Parousia and that of the Priesthood. Why, it is asked, should Christ appear a second time, when He has already secured His people's salvation by His presence in heaven as their ever-living Intercessor? Is there, indeed, any room for the Parousia in the writer's essential thought; and has it not been taken over by him as a sort of theological remainder, simply out of loyalty to the primitive tradition, but at the expense of the inner consistency of his thought?

In answer we may say that so far as the tradition is concerned our author accepts it whole-heartedly; he follows it, but not slavishly, and in following he has set his mark upon it. "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"—that is the tradition; the tradition that connects sacrifice

and atonement and intercession and priesthood with future power and glory. It is the tradition of the fifty-third of Isaiah, and of Jewish Apocalyptic in one of its aspects. Above all it is the Gospel tradition, which links the announcements of Jesus' passion and death with those of His coming again in glory (Mark viii. 31–38).

Further, whenever metaphors are pushed to extremes we get bad theology. Priesthood is a metaphor. So that if there be any want of harmony between the Parousia tradition and that of Priesthood, then so much the worse for Priesthood. "A foolish consistency" in such matters is not a weakness of the mind of Hebrews. Priesthood cannot and indeed does not carry all the weight of his thought. He has other categories. A priest who through eternal spirit has offered a perfect atonement has no need to come to earth again for that purpose—so he argues. Accordingly when Christ appears a second time His coming is to be entirely "apart from sin", without any reference to sin or sin-bearing. All that work of atonement is for ever past. It is not therefore as a Priest that Christ returns. Our salvation does not rest upon a metaphor, but upon the ever-livingness of Christ.

Christ's coming is to be "apart from sin", and "unto salvation". "Salvation" must be taken here in its full eschatological sense. The Christian salvation is an "eternal" salvation; and earth and time cannot contain *all* of the "eternal" that is our promised inheritance. There is always something incomplete, something unrevealed, something that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, something reserved in heaven. It is true that as Christians we are come to

Mount Sion. That is our standing; but salvation is something more than status, and we are not left there eternally at gaze. Our citizenship is in heaven, but it is not yet made perfect. We have still to go forth without the camp of this visible world, to the "true" tabernacle where Christ is. For here we have no continuing city, we seek one which is to come. Our salvation is not complete until we have passed within the veil. Anything else, anything less than this would be for Hebrews only a copy and shadow of the "true". And since we cannot rise to heaven of ourselves Christ must raise us thither. This is the purport of the Parousia.

Of the Parousia! For in this connection no mention is made of the Resurrection. As an operative factor in salvation it simply does not appear. It may be presupposed, indeed it must be, else the believing dead would have no share in the final blessedness. In the Pauline epistles the Resurrection and the Parousia appear together as different sides or aspects of one great process. And it is so here. The Resurrection is taken up into the Parousia, just as the Resurrection of our Lord is taken up into His Ascension. Christ's coming is "unto Salvation". We cannot say that the Parousia is not essential to the thought of the writer.

2. With the Parousia the writer associates the Judgment. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this . . . judgment" (ix. 27). In the fourth chapter there is a hint of a spiritual judgment that is always in process through the livingness of God's word (iv. 12), just as in the Fourth Gospel there is a present judgment through the coming of light into the world (iii. 19). But here, as there, it is accom-

panied by the certainty of a final (eternal, vi. 2) verdict upon the life of men. "Ye are come to the God of all men and to him as Judge" (xii. 23).

Here the reference is general—to all men. Elsewhere the thought of judgment is associated with the possibility of Apostasy (cf. ii. 2–3, vi. 4–8, x. 26–31, xii. 25). Such as draw back are left in God's contempt apart, "My soul shall have no pleasure in him" (x. 38). For those who sin wilfully, who persist in crucifying the Son of God afresh, there can be no more sacrifice for sin, no place of repentance, only a fearful looking for of judgment. "Whose end is to be burned" (vi. 8). The immediate reference is to the field, but the moral inference is plain. "Unto Perdition" (x. 39) is another description of their end—separation from God, exclusion from all that gives value to life, absolute loss. "Annihilation" has been suggested, but that would be against the general trend of Jewish and Christian thought.[1]

On all this the comment of a moralist like Professor A. E. Taylor may suffice. "It is not clear to me," he writes, "that there are any merely 'animal' men, who have *never* felt, however obscurely, the solicitation of a more than temporal good. But *if* there are such men, it would be conceivable that their destiny should be as limited as the good to which they respond. . . . But there is no doubt whatever about the existence of men who are 'spiritually awake' and yet false to the good to which they are awake. . . . What I find clearly incompatible with an ethical faith is the easy belief

[1] T. H. Robinson, *Hebrews*, p. 80 and J. H. Leckie, *The World to Come and Final Destiny*, pp. 108, 351.

that the destiny of the 'awakened' man who obstinately persists in disobedience to the heavenly vision can possibly be the same as that of the man, if there is one, whose 'vegetable' slumber has never been disturbed at all. . . . What the 'second death' may be, I trust none of us may ever find out, but in a morally ordered world it must surely be a terrible possibility"[1] (see further Chapter VIII).

3. Unto Salvation! As we have seen there is an element in the Christian salvation which is not realisable in the present order, something that points forward and calls for perfecting, "something evermore about to be". All through the New Testament there is this tension as to salvation: it is at once present and future; we have it, we are to receive it. And this is pre-eminently true of Hebrews. The writer is continually thinking in terms of an "end", and for him that end is never a mere termination put to things as they are. He looks upon it rather as a fulfilment, a carrying to completion of what is here in process, and a revelation of its true meaning and purpose. He follows the old Jewish tradition in thinking of history as governed by a divine purpose and as leading to something. He thinks that what of good or evil is here in process must come to its true and final consummation, and that the world is moving on to an inevitable climax of judgment and salvation. As thoroughly as Paul he believes that He who has begun a good work in us will perform it unto the day of Christ.

This view of human life and destiny is old and worn to us, and it is difficult to recapture the feeling of freshness and release and hope with which it broke upon the

[1] *The Faith of a Moralist* I. 329 f.

old world. Dr. Edwyn Bevan is doubtless correct in thinking that a conception of the course of history which gave it meaning and interest may well have been one of the factors in the ultimate triumph of Christianity within the Roman Empire. "Even those who had been accustomed from childhood to the hopeless view of the time-process and had taken it as a matter of course, might experience a thrill of new life, if they came into contact with people who awakened in them the thought that perhaps after all the time-process was not vanity, that the world was really moving under Divine guidance to some transcendent consummation."[1]

That is what our author looks for—a *συντέλεια των αἰώνων*, a consummation of the ages (ix. 26), a new order of redeemed life, a Kingdom which cannot be shaken. He quotes an old oracle from the prophet Haggai, "Yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven" (xii. 26). This he interprets as a prophecy of the final doom of the present order, and as a manifestation of the new. "Things that are made" are removed in order that the true and eternal things may shine forth. The consummation is the manifestation of the Kingdom which cannot be shaken—a crisis not of destruction but redemption; an eclipse that is also an apocalypse; an end that is also a beginning; not frustration, but fruition and fulfilment.

Of all this the writer was very sure. The consummation had set in with the appearing of Christ to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It was still in process. They were living in it—next door to eternity. The times were unsettled, the crisis was near. Not yet had they resisted unto blood; but any day they might

[1] *The Hope of a World to Come*, p. 34.

be called upon to suffer. "Patience," he cries. The darkness is passing, the dawn is breaking, the day appearing. "For in a little, a very little while, the Coming One will come and will not tarry" (x. 32–37).[1]

That little while, "that Mikron", says one writer, "like the Maranatha, the Lord cometh of 1 Corinthians, xvi. 22, must have been one of the watchwords of the early Church, bursting hot from the lips of disciples waiting amid evil and obloquy and persecution for the relief and triumph and splendour of the Parousia".[2] But if so it was a watchword that ultimately became a difficulty and a problem, as can be seen from John xvi. 16. One wonders what happened in the case of these Christians, when the "little while" lengthened out, and no sign of the Advent appeared in the heavens. Did they come to see it in the crises and upheavals of their own times, as others did in the fall of Jerusalem? Did they meet their Lord in the fire or at the stake, instead of in the air? Or did they, like John and his friends in Ephesus, find a solution of the "little while", in their Lord's abiding "presence" (parousia) through the Holy Spirit (John xvi. 16)? They could do so quite naturally. They had the ever-living Christ and High Priest; it was but a step from the perpetual Priest to the perpetual Presence. But who can tell?

That of course would not close the matter for them, as it does not close it for us. John's bold transmutation of the eschatology proved to be the bridge by means of which the faith of the Church passed into the

[1] There does not appear to have been any feeling that the Parousia was delayed, or of disappointment thereat. Christ's coming was still regarded as certain and near at hand. One does not seek to restore confidence by pointing to something in which confidence has already failed.

[2] H. P. Forbes, *The Johannine Literature*, p. 302.

centuries.[1] But the "bridge" is not to be mistaken for "the end of the road". To us that old apocalyptic world-view has lost much of its meaning. We no longer think in terms of crisis and cataclysm. (Though, why should we not?) Evolution and progress are our watch-words. We have a long-extended time-view of untold millions of years. The whole universe is slowly running down like a clock. But the end of the physical universe is not the Christian end. Something here is unfulfilled. God is working His purpose out in the history of the world, in mercy and in judgment. Everything points forward. Faith requires an end. The tension between the present and the future salvation may be relaxed the more that Christians are assured of things unseen, but it is never overcome. It was with Paul to the end: "The Lord is near," he wrote in Philippians. Even John's modernisation is incomplete. He has the "last day", and "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also". That is as essential for him as the abiding presence. It is impossible to empty eschatology of time, or to replace the "Age to Come" by the "World to Come". Both must go forward to completion and solution. And that must come not from earth or on the earth, but from above, from God, and in a time and in ways that we know not.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. *Wherefore, we (in course of) receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken*—heavenly, eternal, true—*let us give thanks*—say a grace, not "have grace"—and *so let us worship God acceptably*—"all worship is at heart an incipient Jubilus"—*yet with godly fear and awe. For our God is a consuming fire.*

[1] So Mackintosh, *Immortality and the Future*, p. 139.

CHAPTER III

LET US DRAW NEAR

In the previous chapter we have been dealing with what may be described as the philosophy of the writer—the philosophy of the World to Come; in the present we come to his governing conception of religion. He thinks of it under the symbol of a covenant between God and man, a symbol that was dear both to Jewish and to Christian hearts.

In its origin the word carries the notion of "binding", a binding arrangement or agreement. The covenant does not originate with man, but with God. It does not lie with man to lay down terms to God, or to exact favours from the Almighty. "*I* will make my covenant between me and thee." God draws near to His people in grace, stooping to their weakness and laying His love under bonds for their help and salvation; while they draw near to God in worship and obedience, pledging themselves to Him in dependence upon His grace and favour. A "happy bond", a gracious relationship of mutual fellowship and service between God and His people—such in essence is the idea of covenant. What it says is, "I will be your God and ye shall be my people".

In Judaism we have the religion of the Old Covenant; in Christianity the religion of the New, the Second, the Better, the Eternal Covenant. The epistle is taken up with the contrast between them, as represented by the persons and work of their respective mediators—Angels,

Moses, Levitical priests on the one hand, and Jesus, the Son of God, on the other. The writer takes his start from Jeremiah's vision of the New Covenant. The oracle is quoted twice, in the first instance to mark the Newness (viii. 8), and in the second to establish the Graciousness of the Christian Covenant (x. 16). And though these are not really separable it will be convenient to discuss them apart.

I

"In that he saith a *new* covenant, he hath made the first old." The Old Covenant was not faultless; its imperfections had long been recognised. According to Hebrews its course was sped, and it was ready to vanish away in Jeremiah's day. Paul goes farther and asserts that its glory had begun to fade from the day of its birth, from the time of Moses (2 Cor. iii. 13). All the prophets were looking for a new and better order of things. But Jeremiah was the first to speak definitely of a *New* Covenant, and to forecast its terms. A covenant, a bond, no longer national, but personal and individual; no longer statutory, but free and spiritual, with the law written upon the heart and obedience as an instinct and a joy; with a knowledge of God, an access to God open to all men, and their sins and iniquities remembered no more against them—such was to be the new and gracious order in which God was to be their God and they to be his people. "Behold the days come," said Jeremiah. "Behold," says Hebrews, "the days have come." The New Covenant is in being.

It is important to notice that in contrasting the old with the new the writer of Hebrews does not set the two covenants in fundamental opposition to each other.

That is Paul's method. Paul is very sure that all the promises of God have come to fulfilment in Christ, that in Him is the Everlasting Yea. He knows that the Law is spiritual. Yet when he writes of the old and the new covenants he does so as if they had nothing in common. The breach between them is absolute. On the one hand there is Sinai which gendereth to bondage; on the other Jerusalem above, the mother of all the free (Gal. iv. 24 f.). In the one case the ministry of the letter, of death and condemnation; in the other the ministry of spirit, life and acquittal (2 Cor. iii. 6–9). Christianity is an absolutely new creation.

Hebrews comes to the same problem from a different angle. Probably his experience had been different. For Paul Judaism as represented by the Law was always the enemy; it had made him suffer so. His conversion had been a spiritual agony, and that convulsion coloured his thoughts to the end. For our author conversion was an "enlightenment", and we are never conscious of any element of strain in his thought or in his experience. He was no wrestler like Paul. We may also think of him as more historically minded. Jesus sprang out of Judah, and Christianity out of Judaism. It had its roots there, and so, for our author, the New Covenant is indissolubly linked with the old. There is no breach of continuity. Not that the writer is blind to the defects of the Old Covenant. On that point he is as frank as Paul or any of the prophets. The Law was weak—Paul, thinking of its moral side, says "through the flesh"; Hebrews, dwelling on its ceremonial aspect, says, "through its ordinances". The Law made nothing perfect. Its priests only served an example and

shadow of good things to come. Its sacrifices could never make any one perfect as concerning the conscience. Its promises were unfulfilled. But with the appearance of Christ, the old law is set aside; Levi's tribe is dispossessed; the shadows give way to realities, and expectation to attainment. Christ is the end of the Law —for Paul as its Executioner, for Hebrews as its Perfecter. In Christ the symbol becomes the reality. Christus Consummator! Like the evangelist Matthew, our author holds that Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfil. Both are scribes instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, and like good householders they bring out of their treasures things new and old. Both love the old and draw upon an ample store. For Hebrews all the good things of Judaism—the house, people, covenant, promises, sanctuary, priesthood, sacrifices, forgiveness, redemption, inheritance, rest—reappear in Christianity, but on a higher plane. Everything in Christianity is "better", "more excellent"; not only better but "eternal"; its salvation, redemption, sacrifice, inheritance, covenant, all eternal, final, absolute.[1] For Hebrews, as for Paul, Christianity is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold they have become new. And new in Christ! When asked by the Marcionites what new thing did Jesus bring? Irenaeus made answer in the words "*Omnem novitatem attulit semet ipsum afferens*", "He brought all that was new in bringing Himself"![2] So also might Hebrews have answered. Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant, and with that we pass to its Graciousness.

[1] For "better" cf. i. 4, vii. 19, 22, viii. 6, ix. 23, xii. 24; for "eternal" cf. v. 9, ix. 12, 14, 15, xiii. 20.

[2] Deissmann, *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, p. 150.

II

"The author of Hebrews", says Dr. Moffatt, "shows more originality in treating grace than any other writer of the N. T. after Paul, and his few specific allusions to grace are generally stamped with idiosyncrasies of their own" (Grace in the N.T., p. 345). But it is in his treatment of the covenant and its associated ideas that we see most clearly the supremacy of grace, and how it becomes the basis of the new life. Every covenant is a symbol of grace, according to Philo. "Gracious engagements", is Carlyle's term for them.[1] "Our engagement to be the Lord's"! And in the New Covenant we have grace at its fullest, with Jesus as its Mediator and Surety. "That which gives eternal validity or absoluteness to the new covenant is *the person*, the Son of God, who in all points carries it through—who reveals, mediates and sustains it" (Davidson).

Three points are specially emphasised.

1. At the heart of every covenant there is *a Promise*, a gracious declaration of the divine will—God saying, "I will, I will be". They are all covenants of promise. And Jesus, says Hebrews, is mediator of the better covenant, because it is established on better promises. "I will be to them a God; I will put my laws into their mind and write them on their hearts; all shall know me from the least to the greatest; their sins and iniquities will I remember no more"—these are the

[1] *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, 5: 151. From the Protector's last words:—

"Oliver, we find, spoke much of 'the Covenants'. . . . They were Two, he was heard ejaculating; Two, but put into One before the Foundation of the World. . . . I think I am the poorest wretch that lives: but I love God; or rather, am beloved of God."

better promises, promises with a richer content of grace and blessing than any under the Old Covenant. And it is Jesus who mediates and gives effect to them through the offering of Himself. The writer fastens upon the last of them, the promise of forgiveness, as the very heart of the covenant. That for him is *the* promise, for on it hang all the rest. "All shall know me . . . *for* I will be merciful to their unrighteousness." Fellowship with God is only possible on the basis of forgiveness. Paul makes much of the law written upon the heart, the inwardness of the Gospel. And so does Hebrews, but in a different fashion. He will not hear of a new law, not even of "the law of Christ", or "the law of the spirit". In that respect he is more antinomian than Paul himself. But worship is to be rendered to God and obedience to Christ with a true heart and in full assurance of faith, and all by way of response to and as inspired by the grace of God in the putting away of sin. We are cleansed . . . to serve the living God. That, for him, is the inwardness of the New Covenant.

2. *The Oath* (vii. 20–28). "The Lord sware and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." The many levitical priests were appointed without any oath. But the word of the oath comes after the law, sets it aside and makes the Son a priest who is perfected for evermore. The oath countersigns the priesthood and the covenant, and gives to them the stamp of finality. Thereby Jesus is made the Surety of the better covenant; "He insures permanently near relations with God" (Bruce).

Apparently Philo and his contemporaries had qualms about the oath. It seemed to them to be inconsistent

with the character of God. God's mere word should be sufficient and had no need of confirmation. Hebrews had no such scruples. The oath, for him, is not a difficulty, but a new grace (vi. 13–20). In the case of the promise made to Abraham, God sware by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." In their oaths men invoke a greater than themselves. But there is none greater than God, so He sware by Himself. He put His own name and nature and person in pledge for His word. The oath is God saying "Amen" to His own divine appointment, His own gracious purpose, His own true word. An oath is never made lightly. There is urgency in it, vehemence even, the unloosing of a great tide of emotion in the hearts of men—and of God, as Bruce suggests. And once made, it puts an end to all strife and debate. It is final, irrevocable. So also indeed is the promise; but in the oath there is an added, a "more abundant" grace, for in it God stoops to our level to remove our doubt and fear. For by these two great immutables—the promise and the oath—we who have fled for refuge have a strong encouragement to lay hold of the hope that is set before us.

"I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by Thyself, that at my death Thy Son
Shall shine, as He shines now and heretofore;
And, having done that, Thou hast done.
I fear no more."

Swear by Thyself, and Thou hast Donne—and many another!

3. *The Sacrifice*, by which the covenant is inaugurated and maintained. For pious Israel the great covenant

was the covenant of Sinai, and Hebrews takes us back to the story of its dedication (Exod. xxiv.). There he lets us see Moses its mediator acting as a priest, offering sacrifice, sprinkling the blood upon the altar and the people, and saying, "*This is* the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined upon you" (ix. 19). In the blood of the covenant God and the people were brought near to each other and made at one, while the people were cleansed and consecrated to God's service as a holy people. The friendly relationship thus established was renewed and maintained by further sacrifices, more particularly by those of the Day of Atonement. Hebrews does not always distinguish between the different types of sacrifice, but from his point of view it was not at all necessary that he should. For the whole purpose of the sacrificial system in Israel was not the placating of an offended deity, but the establishing and keeping intact of the friendly relations presupposed in the covenant. From this point of view all sacrificial blood might be called covenant blood.

For Hebrews, however, the entire cultus was only a figure of the true, and for the time then present. Its sacrifices of bulls and goats could never take away sin or purify the conscience. "But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come . . . by His own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (ix. 11). Through the sacrifice of Himself Jesus brings in, establishes and maintains (seeing He ever liveth) the new and final order of fellowship and grace. "Ye are come . . . to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling. that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (xii. 24),

At this point a question obtrudes itself. Why does the writer associate the forgiveness of sins with sacrifice, when Jeremiah in his vision of the New Covenant has nothing to say of sacrifice or of a mediator? Is he only blindly following an analogy, or what? To this the true answer is that in doing so he but follows the lead given by his Lord. Jesus had spoken of His death as a sacrifice, and in taking the cup at the Supper-table had said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood". But in that case it may again be asked why does Hebrews make no reference to the Supper, or to the words of Institution? To us it appears exceedingly strange that the New Testament writers in their epistles so seldom refer to the actual words of Jesus. It was not that they were ignorant of them. The early Church was extremely interested in them, and, if current theories are correct, extremely busy about them, not only in collecting and arranging them but in giving form to them. But for Hebrews and the others the life and death of Jesus had a higher value than His words. God had spoken to them in a Son, who when He had made purgation of sins sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. The supreme word, the word of salvation, was the word of the Cross. "Christ was the supreme revelation only as He was the supreme reconciliation" (Oman).

In the present instance, however, it is just possible that the writer does refer to the words of Jesus. The reference is slight, but a straw can show which way the wind blows. Commentators are agreed that in quoting the words of Moses at Sinai (ix. 20), the writer does so from memory and not at all exactly; not in the form given in the Septuagint, but in a form suggested by

the words spoken at the Supper-table. "*Behold* the blood of the covenant", said Moses; "*This is* the blood of the covenant", quotes Hebrews. He had often heard and probably had often used the words of Institution, "This is my blood of the new covenant" (Mark), or, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (Paul). All unconsciously his mind takes the familiar association track. Whether this be so or not, the connection of forgiveness with the sacrifice of Jesus was not without warrant. Behind the analogy of priesthood and sacrifice and suggesting it there stood the figure, the life and death of Jesus. New Testament writers were not "innovators" but "receivers"; and in this connection the procedure of Paul is instructive. But for the disorders in Corinth we might never have had a word from him about the Supper. The account which he gives is that which he had "received", and had previously "delivered". The words—"this cup is the new covenant in my blood"—are strictly "traditional", and not particularly "Pauline". For Paul the covenant has no sacrificial associations. He never of himself speaks of the death of Christ as a covenant sacrifice, or of the blood of Christ as covenant blood. That reference came to him from his Lord.[1] So also with Hebrews. "Christ had died, and died inaugurating a covenant in words which the writer has in mind."

III

The God of the Covenant—"I will be your God". The epistle begins with a word about God—"God . . .

[1] cf. Morgan, *Religion and Theology of Paul*, p. 219, and G. H. C. Macgregor, *Eucharistic Origins*, p. 178.

hath spoken", and from this everything else proceeds. The writer lays stress upon the Divine Transcendence—"the Majesty on High". God is the King Invisible, whose throne is in the highest heaven, at whose right hand the Son is seated, and in whose service myriads of angels are continually engaged. There is the transcendence of *Might*. God is the Living God, ever active in nature, providence and grace, "for whom and by whom the universe exists", the final end, the source and ground of all that is. To draw near to Him in worship is life and blessedness; to depart from Him is perdition. His is the living and creative word that called the worlds into being. He spake and it was done: "He built all things". His, too, the living will that sustains all things, "the living will that shall endure, when all that seems shall suffer shock". His is the kingdom that cannot be shaken.

There is also the transcendence of *Holiness*, separateness from the world, "otherness". At Sinai we are shown how dreadful this is; but we have travelled a long way since then, and in Christianity we have come to Mount Sion, and to Jesus the mediator of "the kindlier covenant". God's holiness is a moral holiness, of which men are made partakers through His fatherly discipline. Without such holiness, without moral consecration to the ends and purposes of God, no man can see God. There is still the "otherness". God is to be worshipped with thankfulness, but also with godly fear and awe. For our God is a consuming fire. Ye are come . . . to the God of all men as Judge. Jesus does not appear in judgment. "We know Him that hath said Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." These words are applied to apostates, to such as have broken with the covenant and have counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. So far as the record goes there is no thought of the wrath of God as resting upon all men. Such a notion does not accord too well with the covenant conception and its sacrifices.

Above all there is the transcendence of *Grace*. God's throne is a throne of grace, to which we can draw near with boldness, where we can obtain mercy and find grace to help in every hour of need. He is the rewarder of all who diligently seek Him. Grace reigns. God is the God of Revelation. The same God who spoke to the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us through a Son. We have had the gospel preached to us as well as they. There is no break in revelation. God's words are words of grace, and His final word is spoken in the Son, who . . . when He had made purification of our sins, sat down at the right hand of God. The last word in the Son is a word of forgiveness, and a promise of help. God hath spoken and He still speaks from heaven. His are the promises and the oath. He keeps His word: He is faithful that promised. And He is not unfair: He will not forget what you have done, or the love you have shown in ministering to the saints.

God is described as the Father of Spirits—McLeod Campbell's favourite phrase; but of the ordinary New Testament conception of God's fatherhood there is little trace. Only in connection with the education of His sons through suffering do we find any direct expression of a fatherly relationship to men. But the Father is perfectly revealed in the Son, who reflects God's

bright glory and is stamped with God's own character. The Father's love to men is only mentioned once and in a quotation from the Old Testament, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." But that need not cause us any concern. For "grace" is just love on its deepest side; love with God's majesty and holiness in it; love with judgment and forgiveness in it; love reaching out to the distant, the needy, the sinful, and ever operative for their help and salvation. And salvation originates with God. By the grace of God Jesus tasted death for every man. The world's Creator is the world's Redeemer, who brings many sons to glory. It became Him for whom are all things and by whom are all things to make the Pioneer of our salvation perfect through sufferings. So that redemption through suffering and sacrifice is no blot or accident, but is consonant with God's whole scheme of government for the world. Behind it is the whole force of His creative gracious will; by which will we are sanctified. "All is of grace, and grace is for all." Salvation begins with God, and He it is who carries it through to the end and perfects it. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen."

IV

The People of the Covenant—"Ye shall be my People". Christians have inherited a great and honourable name. They are the People of God, the new Israel. Like ancient

Israel they have been " sought out ", " called with an heavenly calling ", and made, fashioned and welded into a people by a divine discipline in providence and grace. A merciful and faithful High Priest has made reconciliation for their sins, and they have been sanctified, dedicated to the service of the living God, by Jesus' own blood. " Holy brethren ", therefore, and " saints " ! They are also called " sons "—God's " many sons "; but sonship is not central in Hebrews as with Paul. The covenant requires the people in a collective sense, rather than sons. Yet God in His gracious discipline deals with men as with sons, and their sufferings are to be taken as proof of the legitimacy of their sonship. Sons, and " Brethren " ! Jesus is not ashamed to call them brethren, and God is not ashamed to be called their God. The bond between them and Jesus runs back into eternity, for both Sanctifier and Sanctified are all of one, one stock, one origin in God, the Father of Spirits.

Another name for them is the House or Household of God. Of this community the Son is Head—an High Priest over the house of God. He founded it, He redeemed it, and He ever liveth to minister on its behalf. All its members are directly dependent upon Him, are " partakers " of Him. All the benefits of the New Covenant come to them through Him, its Mediator, and in Him are sealed and applied to believers. For they are God's house only on terms of faith, only as they hold their initial confidence firm to the end. As believers they have entered into rest; but there remaineth a Sabbath-Rest for the people of God, and into this they are led by their great High Priest and Forerunner. The

term "Church" is reserved for the heavenly world; a hint, perhaps, that the true Church is not to be looked for upon earth, but only in that sphere of reality which is heaven.

A dedicated people, dedicated to the service of God in worship, a worshipful life—that is how Hebrews conceives of religion under the New Covenant. A coming, a drawing near to God in lowly love and trust and adoration, seeking and finding our true life and blessedness in God's presence, fellowship and service. A worship which implies nearness, fellowship, communion, service, rest; "a worship which", in McLeod Campbell's phrase, "is sonship", "to which the heart of the Father is the Holy of Holies".

Let us draw near, cries the writer. One can almost hear him repeating the refrain of his well-loved psalm, the Venite: "O come let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." Let us draw near: the eternal world is not far away; sin has been purged and the veil drawn back; the new and living way through the Redeemer's flesh stands open, and we have full and free and immediate access to the holiest of all, to the very heart of God. And let us come *boldly*. Ye are not come to Mount Sinai with its thunderings and earthquakes, its terrors and distances; but ye are come to Mount Sion with its nearness and accessibility and its gracious supernaturalness. You have been forgiven and baptised, your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and your bodies washed with pure water. Enter into the holiest, then, with boldness, with "glad fearlessness",[1] through

[1] So Kennedy translates "parrhesia".

the blood of Jesus. Come boldly to the throne of grace. And *with a true heart*—a heart that corresponds in its sincerity to the world of truth and reality to which it draws near. We must be "true worshippers", must worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth. And *in full assurance of faith*—the full assurance of things hoped for, the firm conviction of things unseen; "faith in full sail, bearing right on with the wind, all canvas set" (Rabbi Duncan). *Also with Thankfulness.* "Let us give thanks that we are in receipt of a kingdom which cannot be shaken, and so let us worship God acceptably." The old world comes tumbling down; but they stand amid the wonders of divine grace and in front of the splendours of the heavenly world, and they are lost in wonder, love and praise. Gladness is to be the order of the day in presence of God's brave new world. The music of Hebrews may lack Paul's trumpet note, "Rejoice, and again I say Rejoice", and the deep organ roll of "Who shall separate us?" But it has a beauty of its own. Its "grace-notes" are unmistakable, and that "Let us give thanks" is clear enough and bold enough. Like Paul the author begins to tune his instrument in the bass, in the sense of sin forgiven and in gratitude for the opening of the kingdom of heaven. The new Venite begins like the old with "O come let us sing, let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation". It continues in holding its glad fearlessness and its rejoicing of hope firm to the end. It closes and is perfected in the festal joy of heaven.

With thankfulness because of God's goodness; but also *with Godly fear and awe*, because of His greatness and holiness. Our God is gracious: our God is a consuming

fire. Not the terror of a creature in the presence of the unknown, "the wholly other", the supernatural; and not the trembling of a sinner before his righteous judge; but the thankful, trustful, reverential awe of a worshipper, as of Jesus in the garden, "who was heard in that he feared". The ground on which we stand is holy ground—consecrated by the blood of Jesus—and we must take off our shoes.

By way of summary we may take the following passage from Philo: it breathes the very spirit of Hebrews. "What am I", Philo represents Abraham as saying, "that thou shouldst impart to me of thy speech? Am not I an exile from my country? . . . Am not I an alien from my father's house? . . . But thou, O Lord, art to me my country, thou art my kinsfolk . . . thou art my reward, my glad fearlessness . . . why then should not I dare to utter my thoughts? . . . Yet I who speak of daring confess my awe and terror. . . . Without ceasing, therefore, I find delight in this blending, which has moved me neither to speak boldly without godly fear, nor to tremble before God without glad fearlessness."[1]

Let us draw near. The essential element in worship is sacrifice. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts" is still the rubric for worship in the beauty (majesty) of holiness (Ps. xcvi. 8). Though we have no material sacrifices to bring, we still have somewhat to offer. Ours are living sacrifices, dedicated lives and spirits, and our worship finds full and fitting expression in our *Sacrifice of Praise*, "the fruit of lips which celebrate God's name".

[1] Kennedy, *Philo's Contribution to Religion*, p. 130.

That is our Peace-offering (the most joyous of all the Jewish sacrifices), and in it our fellowship comes to its crown. Our worship is to be fully and " continually " eucharistic. Choral, too, when need be. The reference is to thanksgiving in prayer. In Judaism the rule was that prayer should begin and should end with ascriptions of praise, and according to the Rabbis prayer takes the place of sacrifice. " So long as the temple stood we used to offer a sacrifice and thus atonement was made; but now we have nothing to bring but prayer. Prayer is dearer to God than all good works, and than all sacrifices." R. Abahu said: " What shall replace the bullocks we formerly offered to Thee? ' Our lips ', in the prayer we pray to Thee."[1] So Hebrews, of the praise we bring. With heart and voice we offer our sacrifice; but also in deeds. "*To do good and to communicate* (beneficence and charity) *forget not.*" The rabbis held that almsgiving and deeds of lovingkindness (i.e. of personal sympathy and service) were equal to all the commandments of the law. Alms given in the proper spirit were more than all sacrifices, and deeds of lovingkindness more than almsgiving. It is told how Johanan ben Zakkai consoled a disciple who was lamenting over the destruction of the Temple, the place where atonement was made for the sins of Israel: My son do not be grieved; we have an atonement that is equal to it. What is that? Deeds of lovingkindness, as it is said, " I desire lovingkindness (hesed) and not sacrifice " (Hos. vi. 6).[2]

In rabbinical Judaism prayer, praise, charity and the study of the sacrificial laws were regarded as surrogates for the actual sacrifices, the cessation of the Temple

[1] Moore, *Judaism*, 2: 218. [2] Moore, 2: 171 f.

worship being looked upon as temporary. But in Hebrews these are not substitutes; they are the only sacrifices possible in a spiritual worship. Christianity is not an approach to normal Judaism; it transcends it. The offering made by Jesus through eternal spirit supersedes all sacrifices save those of the heart; and with these God is well pleased. Let us therefore draw near, entering the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and "by Him" let us offer our sacrifices of praise and lovingkindness.

V

So far we have been looking at the Godward side of the dedicated life. We come now to its manward aspect. For this we turn to the final chapter of the epistle, in which the writer affords us a glimpse of the everyday life of the household—a Christian Interior (xiii. 1–7).

Let your brotherly love continue, he writes. His readers are very dear to him. He is proud of them and of their work, of the love which they had shown, in ministering, as they still did, to the saints (vi. 10). He urges them to continue in this, and to think how they can provoke one another to love and good deeds (x. 26). The fellowship, the ministry, the gift is there; but like all good gifts it requires to be stirred up. All this within their own immediate circle. But there was a wider circle of brethren to whom they must show love as well—strangers, Christian brethren travelling for purposes of business, or on the work of the church. These would not readily find a welcome or a lodging in non-Christian homes. Inns were dear—how dear! sighed the wealthy Seneca—and rough and dangerous, often the head-quarters of robbers and houses of ill fame, no fit place

for Christians.[1] Be not forgetful, then, he writes, of the old religious grace of hospitality, for thereby, he reminds them, some, like Abraham and others, have entertained angels unawares. Brethren in prison for their faith are to be remembered—visited, helped, their fines paid and their families cared for—as also are the sufferers from ill-treatment by outsiders. In former days the brethren had suffered imprisonment and the spoiling of their goods through anti-Christian pogroms, and had taken it all with gladness. Others had suffered through making common cause with them (x. 32 f.) Let the same brave spirit prevail in these new difficult days. Remember the prisoners with helpful sympathy, as if you yourselves were in prison; and the oppressed too, since you are still in the body and liable at any moment to be exposed to the same harsh treatment. Let marriage be held in honour, the purity of family life maintained, and sexual vice abhorred. A true brother-love will see to this, and God—God will punish the vicious and the adulterous. Brother-love, Stranger-love, Marriage-love! but, for God's sake, no Money-love; no covetousness, no hoarding, no anxiety as to worldly possessions, no fear of loss or poverty through persecution! *He* hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". Let your response to that martial strain (Joshua i. 5) be just as confident: "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can men do to me?"

In this picture of the inner life of the household one or two points call for comment.

1. The writer's emphasis upon brotherly love is notable, more particularly in view of the fact that he

[1] cf. Halliday, *The Pagan Background of Early Christianity*, Ch. III.

never speaks of love towards God or towards Jesus. We might think of this as temperamental. He is far from effusive, and only once does he let his heart speak out and break through his natural reserve (vi. 9–11). But there is a deeper reason. We are to draw near to God in reverence, yet with gladness and fearlessness. And for such an attitude the fitting word is not "love" but "faith". In those days "love" (*eros*) had associations that were doubtful; it had to be born anew and baptised into Christ as "*agape*" ere it could be freely used by Christian writers. In things pertaining to God "faith" represents the proper attitude of the soul, "if only for this reason, that faith denotes a moral submission which might be missed by love" (Moffatt[1]). In any case it is Hebrews' word, just as it is Jesus' word and Paul's word. On the other hand, for human relationships Hebrews has no word but "love". Love is the master-key that unlocks all the household doors. No vague, fluent emotion, but a thoughtful, watchful, kindly, helpful regard for others. For the brethren in the first instance—but how soon to burst its banks and flow into the larger world—and especially for the poor, the weak, the distressed and the suffering. For its individual members; but also for the brotherhood as a whole, its peace and devotion, its honour, purity and wellbeing. A responsibility resting upon all its members and not only on its leaders, to see that no one fails of the grace of God, the worst and last disaster of all; that no root of bitterness is allowed to spring up and poison the springs of the community life, and that no one turns to an immoral and profane manner of life, like Esau (xii. 10 f). A love that,

[1] *Love in N.T.*, p. 162.

like the divine love, is full of discipline; tender, redemptive, life-giving—the true church discipline. "The episcopal function of the community" (xii. 15).

2. Hebrews is not a treatise upon Christian Ethics. The writer never looks beyond the walls of the household. He makes no reference to the world outside, to the State or to the public life of the time. He has no instructions for a Christian citizen living in the midst of an alien civilisation. Strictly speaking his work is not an apology for Christianity. It has no propaganda, no hint of missionary enterprise. For the moment the writer is entirely the pastor, not the evangelist. His problem is a religious problem, and he wisely concentrates upon the inner life of the brotherhood. After all there is no apology, no propaganda, no moral guidance to match the dedicated lives of Christians. The humane, generous, redemptive love of the brethren, the purity of their family and social life, the unworldliness, and other worldliness of their outlook were the best commendations of their faith, and new and vital forces in the life of their time. "It can hardly be doubted", says Edwyn Bevan, "that the attraction of Christianity from the very beginning was social. It was not as a disembodied truth uttered into the air that the Christian 'Good News' laid hold of men; it was through the corporate life of the little Christian societies in the cities of the ancient world. . . . Men coming into contact with such a group felt an atmosphere unlike anything else. Each little group was a centre of attraction which drew men in from the surrounding world. In that way, probably, more than by the preaching of any few individuals, the Church grew."[1]

[1] *Christianity*, p. 51.

3. The source and spring of it all is in the higher world. "Brethren, seeing that we have a great Priest over the house of God, let us draw near . . . and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good deeds." The inspiration is fully and frankly other-worldly. A mightier and purer stream than the Orontes has flowed into the Tiber, a fresh river of life straight from the throne of God. A new dynamic, the powers of the world to come, the sympathy and brother-love of Jesus, has appeared, and a new direction is given to human life.

In this we find the explanation of an apparent anomaly in Hebrews. These counsels for Christian living are set down (Ch. XIII) against the terrific background of earthquake and eclipse (Ch. XII). The end of all things is at hand. In a very little while the Coming One will come. Yet there is no heat, no anxiety, no strain, no eschatological excitement. The brethren are carrying on in quietness and confidence, just as if the present order is to last for ever. Surely the explanation is that their consciousness of the other, the higher world was too real and profound for anything else, a tide too full for sound and foam. There was no room for fear or doubt or anxiety. The expectation of the Parousia was no excuse for slackness or idleness, but rather an incentive, a quickening and reinforcement of all their energies and activities. The Lord was at hand: that meant life and redemption. The Lord was at hand: all the more reason that the household should be awake, its members active, and the house in good order; all the more need for loving hearts and helping hands. A true Interims-Ethik! "Pure religion breathing household laws!"

CHAPTER IV

THE SON OF GOD

SOME friends of the writer are losing interest in the Christian faith, are in danger, indeed, of lapsing from it altogether. And he can think of no better means of rallying them, and recovering them from their dangerous position, than by setting before them a fresh presentation of the person and work of their Lord and Saviour. This he does in his portrait of Jesus as the great High Priest who has passed into the heavens. To consider Him and the finality of His redemptive work is the author's sovereign cure for all despondency and unbelief, his real word of exhortation. So far we have been engaged with the frame of the picture, its outer rim—the philosophy of the World to Come, its inner mounting —the religious relationship of the covenant. In the present chapter we must look at the personality of the great Worker.

The author has a variety of terms in which to describe Jesus, such as Pioneer, Apostle, High Priest, Mediator, Surety, Forerunner, Shepherd. These portray Him as He is seen directly in His work. But there is one term which lets us see Him as He is in Himself, in His inmost personality, and that is the title " Son ". Jesus is the Son of God, or more simply and absolutely " the Son ". This is fundamental; for from this vital and personal relationship to God and to His brethren everything in His work proceeds. Here, as in the Gospels and the

other epistles, His Sonship is the presupposition of all His activity.

The author never seeks to define or explain this Sonship. He takes it for granted that his readers will understand what he means by it. Its true nature is to be gathered from the many incidental references that are made to it in the course of the discussion.

I. *The Eternal Background*

For this we turn first of all to the Prologue. In that majestic yet carefully ordered sentence we have the life and work of Jesus set before us in miniature, the whole epistle *in nuce*.

> "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

With a few bold strokes the artist brushes in the sky. *God . . . hath spoken unto us* ἐν υἱῷ, in one who is Son, one who has the nature of a son. As Westcott has pointed out, the absence of the article in the original fixes the attention upon the nature and not upon the personality. The Son is one in nature and essence with the Father, not some heavenly being or angel exalted to the dignity of the divine. This is further elaborated by a striking metaphor, in which the Son is described as "*the brightness of God's glory and the express image*

(χαρακτήρ) *of His person*" (ὑπόστασις, *essence*). The glory of God is just the divine nature in its fullness —"all my goodness" (Exod. xxxiii. 19); and of this the Son is the effulgence, the shining forth to the world. He is one with God, comes forth from God, and shines by Himself in the world with all the light-giving and life-giving power of the source from which He comes. Moffatt points out that in the original the term "express image" had already acquired a meaning corresponding to the modern "character", and renders accordingly, "stamped with God's own character". The "image" has distinct and clean-cut features of its own, that can be recognised as "in essence all-divine". Milton, with his eye upon the Greek text, gives us, "In Him all His Father shone, substantially expressed".[1] In the Son, therefore, we have origination from God, essential unity with God, and exact likeness to God. In Him God can be fully seen and known. "The Son is the supreme revealer because He not merely brings a message, but reflects and makes visible the Person" (Wickham).

In this community of nature with the Father we have the explanation of the Son's position of eminence in the universe. As Son, and as the Firstborn, He is the divinely appointed Heir of all things, their sovereign Lord and possessor; the Mediator in the creation of the world, in its providential ordering, and in its redemption, "By whom also He made the worlds—upholding the universe as it moves—who, when He had made purification of sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high".

[1] *Paradise Lost*, 3 : 139.

A similar view of the Son's position is given in the comparison with the angels (i. 4–14, see next chapter). Some individual phrases have the same background and perspective. "Made a little lower than the angels" (ii. 9), involves a descent from a higher to a lower estate, a passing from glory to humiliation. "In the days of His flesh" (v. 7), hints at other days in which "the flesh" was not His sphere of being. In "Son though He was, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered" (v. 8), His non-exemption from the ordinary discipline which falls to sons is recorded as a matter of wonder. Melchizedek is described as "made like unto the Son of God" (vii. 3). The Son, in His indissoluble life and His perpetual priesthood, is the divine original to which the earthly priesthood of Melchizedek conformed. In the statement, "Who, through eternal spirit offered Himself unto God" (ix. 14), it is abundantly clear that, whatever else may be involved, the offering made by the Son does not belong entirely to the temporal order. Its true sphere is the eternal. Finally, we have, "When He cometh into the world, He saith, Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God" (x. 5). He comes from the abode where the eternal are, and His whole life is in obedience to the Father's will.

This brings us to another strain of testimony regarding the Son. God is described as "He for whom and by whom the universe exists" (ii. 10). By His word, it is said, "the worlds were framed" (xi. 3)—"He who built all things is God" (iii. 4). He is "the rewarder of all who diligently seek him", the Moral Governor of the world (xi. 6); and it is He, the source and end of all things, who brings many sons to glory (ii. 10). Alike

in Creation, Providence and Redemption God is supreme. And in Revelation it is the same; for it is the Father who reveals Himself, who has spoken to us, in His Son. There is therefore an element of subordination in the work of the Son. In every sphere His action is strictly mediatorial. It is God who introduces the Firstborn to the world (i. 2), who calls and designates Him as High Priest (v. 5–10), who brings Him again from the dead (xiii. 20), and sets Him at His right hand (i. 12). All this, however, only emphasises the fact that the Son is a true son. Subordination and dependence are as truly of the essence of sonship as derivation and community of nature.

To sum up: the native sphere of the Son is the heavenly, the eternal. He partakes of the divine nature, is one with it, and manifests it fully and finally to the world. He is the divine agent in the work of Creation, Providence, Revelation and Redemption. His life is an indissoluble life, and He is always the same, yesterday, to-day and for ever. So far the transcendent background.

1. The first point to be noted is that this is a Logos Christology in all but name, a Christology that is practically identical with that of Paul and John in Colossians and the Fourth Gospel.[1] Many of its terms and phrases are taken from the works of Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon. In the latter writing Wisdom is described as "the artificer of all things". "She is an *effulgence* from everlasting light and an unspotted mirror of the working of God, and an *image* of His goodness, and she, being one, hath power to do all things; and

[1] cf. Lightfoot's notes on Colossians, i. 13–20.

remaining in herself reneweth all things" (vii. 25). In Philo the terms Son of God, Firstborn, Effulgence, Image are applied to the Logos; and the Son, the Logos, is regarded as the divine instrument in creation and Revelation. The vocabulary is there; but vocabulary is not everything. The thought of Wisdom and Philo moves entirely in the realm of abstraction and personification, and in Philo the "Son of God" is little more than the Divine Reason, and never attains to full personality. The Christian writer may borrow the terms, but in his hands they take on a new significance and value. All values are changed when the Son is seen to be a divine person, and the word (the Logos) made flesh.

How, then, was He seen to be so? When we consider the prologue to Hebrews in conjunction with Colossians and the Fourth Gospel the answer is plain. The thought was forced upon the writers through reflection upon the life and work of Christ, and more particularly His work of redemption. In this they were not borrowing from anybody, but simply listening to the intuitions of their own hearts, the intuitions of their faith. Who could this be who wrought so mightily on man's behalf in things pertaining to God? Consider, says Hebrews, consider this Man, how great He is! Think of His manifestation of the Father, the purification of sins, the opening of the heavenly world. In what sphere, what category are you going to place Him? You cannot set Him alongside Aaron and his sons, who with all their labours never did or could make perfect the conscience. Nor can you place Him with Moses, faithful servant though he was in all God's house. Still less can you think of

Him as one of the angels, even though they are sent forth from the heavenly sphere on errands of salvation. No priest's, no prophet's, no servant's place will satisfy; none that is merely creaturely, or human, or even heavenly. What sphere is left then, but the eternal and the divine? The worker cannot be less divine than his work; the river cannot rise above its source. A true perspective requires a base-line in the sky. So in a magnificent venture and unison of faith Hebrews, Paul and John pronounce and acclaim Him as God's Eternal Son. "He who fills the soul's horizon can be no mere incident of human history, but must have His roots of being in unbeginning deity."[1]

2. This involves the "pre-existence" of the Son. Pre-existence has been described as a form of Jewish logic, in which priority in time was taken to be the equivalent of superiority in being. The essences of things of value on earth were supposed to have an existence in the heavens before their appearance upon the earth. But while Hebrews can think of things on earth, such as the tabernacle, as being fashioned according to a divine pattern in the heavens, he never hints at any such ideal existence or prototype for the Son. Obviously, from its chronological reference, "*pre*-existence" is an utterly inadequate method of representing what after all is seen to be essentially beyond time. Accordingly it has been suggested that the idea we wish to convey regarding Christ would be more suitably expressed by the term "eternal".[2] That would be particularly happy as regards Hebrews, for it is Hebrews' own word. As

[1] Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 459.
[2] Mackintosh, p. 457.

we have seen, the term carries the suggestion of absoluteness, of that which transcends and yet includes the processes of time. And that is exactly what is required by our author's conception of the person of the Son. For him the Son had a real and not merely an ideal existence with the Father, " ere yet He knew the gauge of Time, or wore the manacles of Space ". Again, however, we have to remind ourselves that this is a judgment of faith and not of history. Our theories are but " pointer-readings ", words thrown out at a reality which lies beyond our observation and our knowledge. All the same they point to a reality of which faith is very sure, even though it cannot fully comprehend. It makes all the difference in the world to our salvation, if we cannot say of the Saviour that He is yesterday, to-day and for ever the same. " Now faith is the evidence of things not seen." " Through faith we understand ", and through that " breath

> " Of God in man that warranteth
> The inmost, utmost things of faith."

3. In the vision of Christ with which the epistle opens the central place is given to the work of the Son in the forgiveness of sins. The phrase, " Who, when He had purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," stands as a summary of the whole redemptive process, a process which is to receive its crown at the Parousia. Here, in the prologue, it is directly connected with Christ's work in Creation. What this suggests is that the whole world process, cosmic and redemptive, has its beginning with Christ, is in His charge, and by Him is carried triumphantly to its

end. The Creator and Upholder of the world is also its Redeemer and Perfecter. "His hand is still engaged upon His world." What we have is, therefore, the vision of a Christian universe in outline. Nature and Grace, like Sanctifier and Sanctified, are all of one. The world is built on redemptive lines, and Love, divine, self-sacrificing love, is seen to be Creation's final law. From its beginning to its end the world bears the stamp of Christ upon it and finds its ultimate meaning in Him.

4. The writer's main concern in the Prologue is with God's disclosure of Himself. "God . . . hath spoken." Our word for this is "revelation", but Hebrews prefers the more direct and concrete terms of "speech", "voice", "word". *God . . . hath spoken to us in a Son.* There is (*a*) *Continuity* here. "God who . . . spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath at the end of these days spoken to us in a Son." The revelation in the Son is continuous with that of the prophets. While there is contrast there is no break, no contradiction between the old and the new. The speaker is the same in both, the same God, the one ultimate source of truth. God does not change His voice in the course of the generations. His word carries the same glad message of grace throughout. "We have had the good tidings preached to us, even as also they" (iv. 2). (*b*) *Personality.* "In a Son, who shines forth with God's bright glory, and is stamped with God's own character." Here is One who is more than a prophet. The prophets were the bearers of a message. Their authority was entirely independent of their personality. They were always pointing away from themselves, pointing forward to One who was to come.

But the Son has no higher function than to call men to Himself, that in Him they may find the Father. In Him all the Father shines. "A Son," it has been said, "may reveal his father in two ways: either by being like him—so entirely in his image as to be justified in saying He that hath seen me hath seen my father—or by manifesting a constant, reverential, loving trust, and thus testifying that the father is worthy of such trust. Jesus revealed the Father in both these ways."[1] Hebrews has both; but it is in the trust, and more particularly in the obedience of the Son, His oneness with the will of the Father, that we come upon the inmost secret of His personality and of His power and authority (*c*) *Redemption.* In a Son, "who, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high". "The revelation in the Son consists far less in the word He utters than in the Word He is. His life and death were a revelation of God more articulate and vivid than any utterance about Him could be" (Peake). God's last and greatest word is a word of forgiveness, the word of the Cross. God . . . hath spoken in the once-for-all-ness of the Cross (x. 10); and there, where time and eternity are merged in one another through eternal spirit, we have the fullest disclosure of His heart and mind. Revelation is perfected in Redemption. (*d*) *Finality.* To the fathers God had spoken "in many parts and in many modes", through many different agents, in history and law, in prophecy and in psalm. That long process of revelation now reaches its climax, and receives its crown and fulfilment in the Son. All its different lines and types and stages

[1] Erskine of Linlathen, quoted by Moffatt, *Theology of the Gospels*, p. 109.

in nature, history and man, lead up to, meet and find their meaning in Him. There is finality as well as continuity in the divine self-manifestation. For here is the answer to all the religious strivings of the world, here the solution of the world's problem—how to attain fellowship with God. In the Son God draws near to men, and through Him men draw nigh to God. God hath spoken in a Son—His final word.

II. *His Coming into the World*

Of the coming of the Son not much is said in the epistle. He came from another world. His coming was a descent that involved Him in limitations and in sufferings. He came to a body prepared for Him. He took part in blood and flesh; was made like unto His brethren in all things, and for a while He dwelt in lowliness with men. The fact of His Incarnation is emphasised, but nothing is said of its mode, and nothing as to His birth. "Our Lord sprang out of Judah", that is all. Apart from Matthew and Luke the writers of the New Testament are wonderfully silent as to the "How" of His coming; their whole concern is with the "Why"—*Cur Deus Homo.*

"When He cometh into the world, He saith . . . Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God" (x. 5). He came; He was not sent, as a servant might be. He came in loving obedience to the will of the Father. For the Son that will was the axis on which the whole universe turned, the central column round which everything in His life was built.

His coming was a mission of salvation, a mission that

began, continued and ended in sacrifice. "There is no definite suggestion", it has been said, "that He made a sacrifice in order to become incarnate, no suggestion that He showed His χάρις by entering our human lot" (Moffatt, p. l). Nothing definite, perhaps; but surely it is implied (cf. "through eternal spirit" ix. 14). The Son had nothing of His own to show; He came to manifest the grace of the Father, to do the will of the Father. There was no Kenosis for Hebrews as there was for Paul; but there was obedience, and wherever there is obedience there is a forsaking, a yielding up of the will which is sacrifice. Our salvation began with that initial sacrificial obedience. "There was a Calvary above which was the mother of it all" (Forsyth).

> "His words here ended; but His meek aspect
> Silent yet spake, and breathed immortal love
> To mortal men, above which only shone
> Filial obedience: as a sacrifice
> Glad to be offered, He attends the will
> Of His great Father."[1]

While there is no explanation of the Incarnation, a basis is found for it in human nature itself, which is regarded as essentially filial. "He that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are all of one", of one origin, one Father, and therefore of one stock, one whole, one family. *Finitum capax infiniti.* God is not sundered from man by any impassable gulf. The World to Come is not "wholly" Other; it has immanence as well as transcendence.

> "Held our eyes no sunny sheen
> How could God's own light be seen?
> Dwelt no power divine within us
> How could God's divineness win us?"

[1] *Paradise Lost*, 3 : 266.

The tie between the Son and the sons runs back into eternity. He comes as One from afar, yet not entirely as a stranger, but as one of ourselves. He does not become our Brother by coming to earth; He comes because He is our Brother; and He proves His kinship through His fellowship with us in blood and flesh, in suffering and death. In coming He had a purpose in view, "that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people". Not to display the divine presence merely, but to do the divine will. The Incarnation is not an end in itself, but is consummated in the Atonement. In tasting death for every man Jesus the Son is crowned with glory and honour, and the Father fully manifested.

III. *In the Days of His Flesh*

"This man," he says, thrice over![1] The insistence of Hebrews upon the humanity of the Son is unique in the epistles of the New Testament. Paul will have no knowledge after the flesh concerning Christ, and affords us only a glance or two in passing at the earthly life. Hebrews has no such self-imposed limitation. Of set purpose he seeks to relate the facts of the earthly life to the heavenly glory and to the developing faith and theology of the Church. His thesis is that in Christ we have a great High Priest effecting redemption through the sacrifice of Himself. For such a task the humanity of the Son was as essential as His divinity. Only as He was made like unto His brethren in all things could He

[1] cf. iii. 3, vii. 24, x. 12.

become a merciful and faithful High Priest. Godhead was not enough. The interest of the writer in the days of Christ's flesh is, however, very far from being a matter of theory. The theological motive indeed is entirely secondary. "To explain the writer's interest in the earthly life as a mere after-thought, consequent upon his theory of priesthood, is to shroud the whole message of his epistle in a mist of theological pedantry. It would be nearer the mark to regard his theory as the outcome in no small measure of his contemplation of the life."[1] That is a true verdict. The great High Priest in the heavens is no lay-figure, no theological abstraction. The whole picture is instinct with life, and drawn from observation of priestly traits in the life and work of Jesus. Nowhere else, save perhaps in the Gospels, and scarcely even there, is the humanity of the Son so movingly displayed in all its moral splendour, its brotherly sympathy and its sacrificial love. The heroic figure of the Son—Pioneer, High Priest, Forerunner, Example, Lord and Perfecter—is ever before the writer. His ever-recurring appeal to his friends in the midst of their difficulties is Consider Him, Look at Him, Follow Him. The present is intolerably dark and confused; but, "We see Jesus", and—how soon a smile of God transforms the world!

Quite clearly our author is well grounded in the Gospel tradition; and if the locus of the epistle be Rome then we must think of him as familiar with the Roman form of that tradition, the Gospel according to Mark. In any case that Gospel, "the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God" (Mark i. 1), with its profoundly

[1] Scott, *Hebrews*, p. 150.

eschatological outlook and its doctrine of the Cross, affords a true background for the epistle. His references to historical facts and events are few—he is not writing a life of Christ—but all the more significant because so incidental. He knows a great deal more than he tells. "It is evident", he says, "that our Lord sprang out of Judah". He tells of the preaching of "salvation" by our Lord and His disciples, of His compassion for the ignorant and those who are out of the way, of His temptations, prayers, tears and sufferings. Jesus endured the contradiction of sinners, the agony of Gethsemane, the Cross and its shame, and suffered death "outside the gate". There is one reference to His Resurrection, but the Ascension is implicit throughout. A special fondness is shown for the name "Jesus".[1] Usually it comes at some important turn in his argument, or at the end of an impressive phrase. He seems to mention it with a kind of loving, reverential hush. The first instance is important as enabling us to identify the person. "Him who was made a little lower than the angels—Jesus" (ii. 9). Jesus is Son of God Incarnate.

More important are the glimpses which he gives us of the inner life and experience of Jesus. These we must look at in detail.

(*a*) And first of all *His Faith* (ii. 13, xii. 2). "Faith *in* Christ as Lord and Saviour"—that is common ground for the writers of the epistles. Hebrews, as we shall see, takes his stand there also; but his special contribution is in thinking of Jesus as having a life of Faith of His own. In pointing to the faith *of* Jesus he stands alone.

[1] Mentioned ten times—ii. 9, iii. 1, iv. 14, vi. 20, vii. 22, x. 19, xii. 2, xii. 24, xiii. 12, xiii. 20.

Jesus, he says, was not ashamed of His brethren. From their midst He acknowledged the God of His salvation, and offered with them His meed of human praise. As Isaiah and his disciples had confronted unbelieving Israel, so Jesus joined with His brethren—the children whom God had given Him—in making public confession of faith in God. "I will put my trust in Him," he says. In this we have a direct transcript from the Gospels. All His life Jesus was urging men to have faith in God. Unbelief seemed so strange and unnatural. The other, the heavenly world, was so near to Him and so open, and God, the Father, so great and so gracious. And as He taught so He lived and wrought, in utter dependence upon the God of His life. For Him faith was just as Hebrews defined it, a triumphant confidence in things unseen, a seeing Him who is invisible, absolute trust in the power and love of God. No wonder Hebrews singles Him out from the great cloud of witnesses as the supreme Example, the supreme Believer, the Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith (See further Chapter IX, p. 207f).

(*b*) *His Godly Fear* (v. 7, xii. 28). The writer is well acquainted with the prayer-life of Jesus. "In the days of his flesh He offered up prayers and supplications." The immediate reference is to Gethsemane, with its vigil and agony of prayer. The incident is cited by way of proof that there was nothing of self-seeking in Jesus' assumption of priesthood. It was no easy rôle, and it was not accepted lightly. It involved Him in "strong crying and tears", and in sufferings, through which He learned obedience. The doctrinal motive, however, only serves to throw the historical and intensely human aspects into higher relief.

In the Gospels Jesus leaves everything in the hand of God—"Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt". Hebrews takes us a step further. "He was heard", he says, "because of His godly fear". His prayers were answered; He found the assurance and the help which He sought—the assurance that the Via Crucis was for Him the way of the Father's will, and the strength which enabled Him to fulfil the same. In that habitual reference of His life to God lay His godly fear. "The image underlying the word (*eulabeia*, godly fear) is that of the careful taking hold, the cautious handling of some precious yet delicate vessel, which with ruder or less anxious handling might be broken"[1] That sums up accurately the loving, trustful, reverent, sensitive attitude of Jesus towards His life and its task —"this cup". Never rash or headstrong, never anticipating or tempting providence, never experimenting with or forcing the will of God, never taking His life into His own hands; but ever leaving it in the hands of God, ever biding God's time, ever straining to catch the last whisper of God's will, ever offering Himself in prayer and faith to God—such was His Godly fear (see further Chapter VII, p. 154).

(*c*) This leads naturally to *His Obedience and His Sufferings* (v. 8, x. 5). Jesus came to earth to do God's will. Everything in His life was made subservient to that—a massive concentration upon the one thing needful. Like every other son He had to make constant discovery of the content of that will. He had no chart of providence, no map of the way. He had to walk by faith, and to wait upon God, as in Gethsemane, for

[1] Trench, *Synonyms of the N.T.*, p. 191.

His revealing. He did not find it an easy road. It involved Him in opposition and in suffering. "Son though he was" (and therefore one who might have been thought to be exempt by nature) "yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered". Obedience led Him into suffering, and through suffering He was led into yet deeper obedience.

Like the author of 1 Peter, Hebrews dwells upon the "sufferings" of Jesus; and, again, we can see that he knows more than he tells.[1] In the former epistle the sufferings are regarded as redemptive ("by whose stripes ye were healed"); but chiefly as exemplary ("Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps"). Hebrews does not forget the example in the sufferings (xii. 3), but he thinks mainly of their effect upon Jesus. They were the hard school in which He learned obedience, the sharp delicate instrument by means of which He was "perfected". In the original the writer repeats an old play upon words, "Pathos brings Mathos", suffering brings learning, or, keeping up the play, "When pain ends, gain ends too". "Knowledge through suffering entereth"; sympathy also; and here, obedience. He learned obedience, and through obedience He obtained an ever deepening understanding of God's will, and an ever fuller entrance upon His vocation. Till He came to the last great obedience of all, His obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross. And so, being made perfect, having carried His obedience to its true and glorious end, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (see further Chapter VII, page 161).

[1] cf. ii. 9–18, iv. 15–16, v. 7–9, xii. 2.

"Who best
Can suffer best can do, best reign who first
Well hath obeyed."[1]

(*d*) *His Temptations and His Sympathy* (ii. 18, iv. 15). "He Himself hath suffered being tempted." "In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." In the Synoptists these are the temptations of the Son of God, the Messiah. The humanity of them must be read between the lines. Here it is open and unconcealed. Nowhere is the true humanity of the Son so clearly revealed as in this that He was tempted, yet without sin. For what is truly human is not sin, but the experience of temptation and the power to resist it. But resistance costs, and the finer the nature the more costly and deadly the resistance. Jesus *suffered* being tempted—how deeply none can tell, for no one was ever tempted on such heights as He. That is one side of the matter; but there is another. There is some ambiguity in the phrase, "suffered being tempted". Does it mean that He suffered through His temptations, or that He was tempted through His sufferings? Both interpretations are grammatically possible, and both are true of Jesus. But in the light of the context and the situation of the readers the second is to be preferred. The reference is to the High Priest in the heavens, and a high priest has nothing to do with sufferers as such. His business is with sinners, with the weak and the tempted, the ignorant and all who are out of the way. "His compassion, therefore, is not mere pity for men racked by physical pain, or by pain in itself, however arising; it is compassion for men tempted by sufferings towards

[1] *Paradise Regained*, 3 : 194.

sin and unbelief" (Davidson). "*Like as we are!*" The readers of the epistle were being tempted to desert their brethren and their faith, because of the hardships and the sufferings which the profession of that faith involved. The shame, the ostracism, the spoiling of their goods, the prison, the stake—through sufferings such as these, actually or prospectively, they were being tempted to depart from Christ and from the living God. But, says their friend and mentor, even so was Jesus tempted. To turn away from suffering, to take the easy way instead of the way of the Cross, and in so doing to desert His brethren and be false to His task and His Father's will —that was His temptation, too, His constant temptation. Yes, in all points tempted like as we are! So, Hold Fast! He understands and has a feeling for our infirmities. He has been through the fire and has stood the test; wherefore He is able to succour all who are tempted.

(*e*) *His Sinlessness* (iv. 15, ix. 14). "Tempted . . . yet without sin." "Who offered Himself without spot to God." This is mentioned incidentally, without proof or argument or defence. The negative form of the statement calls attention in startling fashion to the fact, but it also tends to hide the positive ethical quality of the achievement. For achievement there was. The sinlessness of Jesus was not a Messianic endowment, not "an automatic necessity of His being". There was suffering and temptation; there was effort and conflict; but there was obedience also and faith and victory. Jesus came to do the Father's will through sacrifice, and He carried through His task with such absolute devotion that no weakness of the flesh, no

assault of evil or temptation had power to turn Him from His course or make Him falter in His stride. There was the full and glad response of His whole being to the Father and the Father's will. His eye was single, His heart pure, His conscience unstained and His will not divided. No bare faultlessness, then, and no abstract virtue; but a concrete moral transcendence through faith and obedience; that holiness, that moral consecration, without which no man can see God—such was His sinlessness. No writer of the New Testament ever dreams of proving or defending it. They saw Jesus taking His stand alongside His brethren, and making common cause with them in the great human enterprise of fulfilling all righteousness. They saw Him taking the way of sacrifice without faltering or complaint, and perfecting His priestly task of purification and atonement in humble dependence of faith upon God. They saw no flaw; there was no defence. It could not be proved; there was no need of proof. It was just one more of the glowing paradoxes and certainties of their faith.

On all this some observations fall to be made.

1. This life of suffering and temptation, of faith and learning and sinless obedience, is described as a process of initiation and preparation for His vocation as Pioneer and High Priest of our salvation. Jesus did not come to earth as a fully-fashioned Saviour. "He had, so to speak, to work Himself into His place in the plan of salvation" (Robertson Smith). The perfecting that is spoken of is the mastery of a vocation, the growth, the evolution, the perfecting of a Saviour. But such perfecting did not proceed apart from His moral development as a man. It was *His* perfecting; the

process was personal, and not merely vocational. There never was any lack of faith or obedience, or any failure therein; but there was increase of knowledge and sympathy and moral power; there was growth and development in personality, growth in the stature of His Sonship as well as of His Manhood. As He suffered He learned, and as He learned He grew in power to obey, and as He obeyed there was greater power to save. "The sustained approach of the Deus humilis," says Mackintosh, "finds its essential counterpart in that rising perfection that *teleiosis* as it is described in Hebrews, which He acquired as He successively seized the occasions which His vocation as Saviour placed before Him. What we behold is a personality creating its own form by a series of acts, of surmounted moral crises, of renunciations conceived and accomplished duly; the enlarging life thus offering an ever more adequate organ and medium of self-revealing Godhead. As He stooped to save He grew in the stature of Divine humanity."[1]

2. In Jesus we have the manhood of the Son of God, a full and truly human life that issues and is perfected in sonship—a revelation also of the real nature and possibilities of both. It has its roots in God, and is nourished and sustained by the otherworldly powers of faith and loving devotion and obedience. At its heart and as its mainspring we see a will entirely devoted to the purpose, the creative and redemptive will of the Father. That constitutes the whole being of the Son. At the centre of His personality He is one with God and in God. In this profound ethical unity we have that which justifies the soul in taking its great leap of

[1] *The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 505.

faith and positing a unity with the Father which is more than ethical. For here, in deed and in truth, the ethical is the metaphysical (cf. John x. 30). Here, also, we find that which constitutes Him Lord and Master. In Jesus we have no lay-figure, no Ideal Man, no Peerless Paragon or Shadow Christ, but a true Man, a true Son, a true Brother; One Who has taken the human road, faced our difficulties, and carried our burdens, One who has triumphed by our human qualities of faith and obedience. Here is real Mastery and Lordship—One Whom we can follow, Whom to obey is eternal salvation.

3. All this has a forward look. Process without result is unthinkable. The work begun must have its end. Earth and time are too small as spheres for so divine a task as bringing many sons to glory. It requires "for ever".

IV. *At the Right Hand of God*

To this position the Son is brought by the God of Peace, brought up from the dead, the solitary reference to His Resurrection (xiii. 20). As we have seen, the Resurrection is taken up into the Ascension; and that in turn is more implied and imagined than dogmatically affirmed. The Ascension and Exaltation of the Son is pictured as the return of a Priest from His sacrifice, and in lesser degree of a King from His wars. In solemn procession He passes from the scene of His sacrifice, conflict and victory, up through the heavens, and in behind the veil, to the innermost sanctuary, and the seat of power and authority at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He enters heaven in the power of that blood which is His life, His indestructible life (vii. 16),

and there He appears in the presence of God on our behalf, ever living to make intercession for us. By the Ascension, therefore, He is definitely marked out and installed as the Son of God with power (cf. Rom. i. 4).

The Son appears in heaven first of all as a great High Priest over the house of God, a Minister of the sanctuary, of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man. To this great ministry—the only ministry thought of by Hebrews—He was specially called by God. All the experiences of earth, all the discipline of suffering and temptation, were directly contributory to it. The Son is " somehow greater ", somehow " more Himself " through having lived and suffered upon earth. " He has taken out of time an eternal gain," a deeper understanding, a richer sympathy, a nobler power. Hebrews stresses the dynamic nature of the ministry. " Wherefore, He is able to succour them that are tempted ; able to sympathise with our infirmities ; able to deal gently with the ignorant and all who are out of the way ; able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him."[1] Of all that Hebrews has to say concerning Jesus this is the sum and the crown—and he says it with joy, " We have such an High Priest who is set down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens " (viii. 1). " Such an High Priest," he says, " becomes us," is exactly suited to our needs—one " who is holy, innocent, unstained, far removed from sinful men and lifted high above the heavens, who since He offered up Himself once for all has no more need to make sacrifice for sin " (vii. 26). Moffatt aptly quotes :—

[1] cf. ii. 10, iv 15, v. 2, vii. 25.

"He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain. . . .
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure."

Set free from the limitations and restrictions of earth, He ever liveth to serve in heaven the people for whom on earth He died. He ever liveth, He continueth ever; a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

His people's representative before God! But also their Forerunner! "Within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered—even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever" (vi. 19). On earth the high priest entered within the veil but once a year, the people never—the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. But now the way is open, and Jesus has entered for us in advance. Jesus is the priestly Pioneer who made and opened the way through the veil, the way of His flesh, the way of His sacrifice. He not only made it, but is Himself the way, the fresh and living way by which we draw nigh unto God. He leads the way and we must follow. All the barriers to immediate fellowship with God are down, and we may go where He is gone. For not until we stand where He is, "risen afar at God's right hand", not until the many sons have been brought to glory, is salvation, theirs and ours, made perfect.

High Priest! Forerunner! *and King!* In the psalm which serves as the writer's text we have a war-lord, a king who becomes a priest; here in the epistle we have a Priest who becomes a King, and yet abides a Priest for ever. "But this man after He had made one sacrifice for sins for ever sat down on the right hand of God;

from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool" (x. 12). In this there is no thought of reward. Jesus moves to the seat of authority as by divine right. His sovereignty is founded on that victory which is His sacrifice. The appointed heir of all things enters upon His inheritance in its fullness, an inheritance now made doubly His by His self-offering. Sacrificial love and obedience are set at the right hand of the throne, and are thereby shown to be the ultimate and sovereign powers in the universe.

In the psalm the king-priest does not wait for the subjugation of his enemies, but leaves his royal seat and takes part actively in the warfare for the establishment of his kingdom. Our Priest-King's warfare is accomplished and He waits; we see not yet all things put under Him. But He waits expectantly; for His servants fight and all the powers of the World to Come are engaged on His behalf. He waits; but at the last He comes again in heavenly power that we may receive from His hands the kingdom which cannot be shaken, and be made partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light. Henceforth He is a Priest for ever. For in heaven we shall still require the help and mediation of our great High Priest.

In the sphere of the eternal, in the days of His flesh, at the right hand of God, Jesus Christ is always the same, yesterday, to-day and for ever.

CHAPTER V

OUR LORD JESUS

In the phrase "Jesus is Lord" we have the oldest and simplest Confession of the Church's faith—a confession that carried all the love and trust, all the adoration and obedience of the Christian heart.

Hebrews makes but sparing use of the title. Only in three instances is it directly referred to Jesus (ii. 3, the Lord; vii. 14, our Lord; xiii, 20, our Lord Jesus). We might think of this as due to the writer's absorption in the thought of Jesus as High Priest. But there was probably another and a stronger reason for the comparative infrequency of its appearance in his chapters. The title had its difficulties for his readers. The Lordship of the Son was being challenged from two quarters—through a belief in angels on the one hand, and through the sufferings and death of Jesus on the other. It is from this point that the discussion in the first and second chapters of the Epistle develops. And what Hebrews asserts in reply is that it is the Son and not the angels who rules in the World to Come. There He is Lord, and that, not in spite of His incarnation, and sufferings and death, but because of them and through them.

I

The starting point is "the more excellent name" possessed by the Son. "Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a

more excellent name than they" (i. 4). "Name" has here the general Oriental sense of "rank" or "dignity" (Moffatt)—the point that is in question throughout (cf. Phil. ii. 9).

The supremacy of the Son is established by a series of propositions given in the form of quotations from the Old Testament. The statements are never argued or defended; being Scriptural, they are simply regarded as final. With two exceptions they are taken from the Psalter, where the writer finds his chief inspiration. What we have is a preacher's choice, and we can easily see how in spoken discourse the quotations could be amplified, and inferences drawn from them outside the strict line of argument. The points established are the following:—

1. *No angel is ever addressed as Son* (Ps. ii. 7, "A lyrical echo" of 2 Sam. vii. 14, which is also quoted). In the Hebrew text of the Old Testament angels are sometimes called "the Sons of God", but never so in the Septuagint, the only version known to the writer and his readers. Neither in the Hebrew nor in the Greek version does any individual angel receive the name or rank of Son.

2. *All God's angels are commanded to worship the Son, the Firstborn.* (From the Song of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 43, which is also found as an appendix to the Psalter in the LXX.) On the strength of this verse some authorities hold that "while raised above the angels the Son was in some sense one of them; that on a day in eternity God had chosen Him out from among His fellows and had commanded them to worship Him". But the writer has already said, "God has spoken in

a Son" (i. 2), that is, in one who has the *nature* of a Son. Anything that savoured of Adoptionism would be anathema to him. It is possible to take the angels as the "fellows" referred to in verse 9; but the attendants upon the Son of a King have neither His rank nor His nature. Their proper attitude is that of worship.

3. *Angels have no permanence, but the Son abides for ever* (Ps. civ. 4, xlv. 6-7, cii. 25–27). God makes His angels into winds, His servants into flames of fire. According to the Rabbinic tradition "every day ministering angels are created from the fiery stream and they utter a song and perish. . . . God changes them every hour. . . . Sometimes He makes us fire, at other times wind". The Son, on the other hand, has a royal and lasting authority, for God is (the support of) His throne. His work is creative. "The heavens and the earth shall perish; but Thou remainest . . . Thou art the same and Thy years shall not fail."

4. *Angels serve, they do not rule.* Dominion belongs to the Son alone (Ps. cx. 1). He sits as Lord at God's right hand, the position of power and authority, waiting until His enemies are made His footstool. *Angels are spirits*—though they are never so called in the Old Testament (Davidson): *Sent forth*, never acting on their own responsibility; continually sent forth, as the participle suggests—"thousands (myriads, xii. 22) at His bidding speed and post o'er land and ocean without rest": *To do service*—"service is not an incident in the history of angels; it is their whole history" (Bruce). And their service though rendered to God is *on behalf of* those who are to inherit salvation.

With this statement as to the service of angels, the

writer has attained his first objective, and the point of departure for his next advance. The Son is God's Firstborn, with a rank and nature that is divine. He is everlasting, His work is creative, and He sits at God's right hand as Lord over all. The angels, on the other hand, are created spirits, and perishable like all created things. In the divine order they are only subjects, worshippers, servants who are continually on the wing in the interests of salvation.

The exposition—little more than the bare bones of a sermon—strikes a modern as somewhat bizarre and unnecessary. To us the supremacy of the Son is self-evident. But quite clearly it was not so in the early days of the faith. The ancient world took the belief in angels and in spirits very seriously, and so did our author. In some quarters Messiah Himself was regarded as an angelic being. In the later Judaism angels were looked upon as the great intercessors with God. The Testament of Levi speaks of "the archangels who minister and make propitiation to the Lord for all the sins of ignorance of the righteous" (iii. 5), and in another place of "the angel who intercedeth for the nation of Israel, that they may not be smitten utterly, for every evil spirit attacketh it" (v. 6). The Johannine Apocalypse (viii. 3–5) shows some sympathy with these ideas, but our author will have none of them. He writes, most probably, in opposition to the notion of Ruling Angels, which had crept into the later Judaism from the Apocalypses. This had been developed until every country and even the farthest stars were regarded as under the rule and care of some tutelary spirit, who was known and worshipped by name, as were Michael, Gabriel,

Raphael, Uriel, etc. There were also the great hierarchies of spirits and powers of the air—Thrones, Lords, Powers, Rulers—and their cults, against which Paul waged such successful war in his Colossian epistle. Against all such conceptions our author enters his emphatic protest. No, he replies; rule and worship are the prerogatives of the Son alone. As for the angels, their true, their only rôle is that of service. On this point the writer's thought is a return from modern novelties to the older, freer, imaginative manner of the Old Testament, where the angels appear as the manifestations of God's presence, the agents of His providence and the messengers of His grace. With this agrees the only statement regarding them which the modern world has taken at all seriously, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (xiii. 2). That is quite in the manner of the poetic realism of the old Hebrew stories.

Like everything else in Hebrews the disquisition on angels has its practical point. Part of the Jewish tradition was a belief in angels as mediators along with Moses in the giving of the Law—first definitely expressed by the Septuagint (Deut. xxxiii, 2, Ps. lxviii. 17). Paul makes use of it in his indictment of the Law as inferior to the Gospel. The Law was given by angels; it did not come direct from God to men as did the Word of the Promise (Gal. iii. 19–20). Hebrews also accepts the tradition, but without detraction. "You are greatly concerned about angels," he says to his friends. "Very well; consider this! If the divine word spoken by angels held good and every transgression and disobedience met with due punishment, how shall we escape if we neglect

the great salvation originally proclaimed by the Lord Himself? You cannot put the word that came through angels above the word of the Lord of angels and of men."

II

"For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we are speaking" (ii. 5). Neither in heaven nor on earth do angels rule; they only serve. In that higher world the Son is Lord. And yet to many in those early days the Lordship of the Son was not too obvious, particularly when His earthly career was considered. To unbelieving Jews and Greeks the preaching of the Cross was a scandal and a folly; but it had its difficulties for believers as well. Suffering always appears as a strange anomaly in a divinely ordered world; and how was it possible to relate the sufferings and death of Jesus to the higher world of divinity? The answer of the epistle to such questioning is that Jesus is Lord in the World to Come not in spite of but because of these things, and that it is in the sphere of His manhood sufferings and death that His glory shines the brightest, and His Lordship is achieved.

The proof is based in the first instance on a quotation from the eighth psalm, a psalm which tells of "man's imperial destiny".

> "What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him?
> Thou madest him a little lower than the angels:
> Thou crownedst him with glory and honour:
> Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet."

However small and unimportant man may seem to be when compared with the moon and the stars, in his own

sphere he is supreme. In the world of nature he is lord, with all things made subject to him. Hebrews is dealing with the World to Come, but that makes no difference to the argument. For lordship is possible for man not in virtue of such powers as he shares with the lower creation—in these he is easily outclassed, but in virtue of his other-worldly powers of mind and heart. Lordship is a spiritual function, and belongs as such to the higher world, even when exercised within the natural order.

The psalm speaks of the subjection of all things, but our author has to confess that as things are we do not yet see all things controlled by man. "Not yet" is his dominion fully assured. Not yet, even with all the progress of the centuries, can we chant with Swinburne, "Glory to Man in the highest, for Man is the master of things". How can we when man is not even master of himself? How can we with sin and suffering and fear and death still in the world, and still unmastered? "Not yet" murmurs Hebrews; but not in sadness. For there is something which he sees that fills his heart with joy and with hope, something which he wishes his readers to see along with him, being very sure that if they only see it as he sees it all their doubts and fears and difficulties will vanish. "*We see . . . Jesus,*" he cries; and with the mention of that name for the first time the whole face of his strangely troubled world is transfigured.

We see "*Him who was made a little lower than the angels —Jesus*". In the original version of the psalm that is a point of honour—created but little lower than God; but here there is a real humiliation for the Son, a "making

lower", a coming down in the world from a higher to a lower estate. "Made lower than," but not "made subject to" the angels as Davidson and Peake insist. That would be in flat contradiction to the tenor of the psalm, and to the thesis of the writer. Angels do not rule; they only serve. Whether the writer thought of the humiliation as only one of degree—very little lower than—as does the psalm in the original, or as enduring only for a little while is uncertain. Either interpretation will fit. But he is reading the psalm with his eyes fixed upon Jesus, thinking more of Him and His short career than of the long history of man, so that the temporal reference seems the more probable. In either case there is humiliation. Yet even in the humiliation there is a hint of distinction. Limitations show the master: he proves his mastery by transcending them. And so with Jesus. He was made in all points like unto His brethren, sharing in all the disqualifications of the human lot, sin alone excepted. Yet in that sphere of humiliation, suffering and death we see Him subduing the limitations and restrictions to Himself, and making them the scene of His glory.

"We see Jesus . . . for the suffering of death *crowned with glory and honour;* that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." "Crowning" is an unusual metaphor as applied to Jesus. The author of the Apocalypse is the only other New Testament writer who makes a similar use of it. With him it is a symbol of victory, and is referred to the ascended life of Jesus. But here the reference is different. "Crowning" is not the same thing as "exaltation", or "enthronement". For these our author regularly uses a phrase from his

favourite psalm, "set down at the right hand of God". The crowning precedes them, and is directly connected with the death of Jesus and not with His exaltation. "We see Jesus . . . crowned . . . in order that (ὅπως) . . . He should taste death for every man." We naturally think of crowning as part of a kingly ceremony; but it had other associations, and here its associations are priestly and sacrificial. Here it is simply the crowning, the consecration, of a great High Priest, as in the case of Aaron (Exod. xxix. 6) and of Joshua (Zech. vi. 11). In the consecration of Aaron the crowning precedes the anointing and the sacrifice.[1]

But how? In what did this crowning with glory and honour consist? We may notice that in the three contrasts between the mediators there is a certain formalism of pattern. In the first there is a "crowning" (consecration), in the second an "appointment", and in the third a "call". Ultimately these refer to the same thing, a consecration, appointment and call to be High Priest. With each of them there is also associated a "glory"; and when this is examined we can see, with Davidson, that the "glory" is not some external halo, something distinct from the appointed sphere or task, but is just the glory of the task itself.[2] Here, we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour that He should taste death for every man. To taste, to experience death

[1] As a far-away parallel we may recall the old Phoenician story, quoted by Eusebius in his *Preparatio Evangelica* (1 : 10)—"Kronos when he was king, and when great danger beset the land, adorned the altar and invested his only son with the emblems of royalty and sacrificed him". Quoted by Buchanan Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, p. 92, as frequently compared with the offering of Isaac. Eusebius gives it as part of the Phoenician theology.

[2] *Hebrews*, pp. 82, 84, 85.

for every man—"When I think of our Lord as tasting death, it seems to me as if He alone ever truly tasted death "[1]—that was His task, sacrificial and redemptive, and that was His glory. (As we shall see later, there is the same glory in His founding of God's House (iii. 3), and in His high-priestly service (v. 5). Always it is the unworldly glory of sacrifice.) And it was so " by the grace of God ". By this something more is meant than kindly permission from God, something more than " a signal mark of divine favour " (Bruce). In the theology of grace everything runs back to the divine will: the initiative is always with God. And so there was nothing that was arbitrary or accidental in the death of Jesus. It all happened according to the gracious purpose of God's will. It was all " appointment ", all " commandment " as the Fourth Gospel insists (x. 18), all of grace.

A glorious task, loyally accepted by the Son—" Lo, I come to do thy will, O God "—such is the first and dominant thought of Hebrews regarding the death of Jesus. " A Glory in the Humiliation ", that is the first point in the writer's apologia for the sufferings and death. In passing we should note how in this matter as in so much else Hebrews is followed and reinforced by the Fourth Gospel. " Sir, we would see Jesus. . . . And Jesus answered them saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. . . . Therefore, when he (Judas) was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. . . . For their sakes I sanctify myself " (John xii. 21 f, xiii. 31 f, xvii. 19).

[1] McLeod Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, p. 258. But see the whole wonderful chapter, " The Death of Christ Contemplated as His Tasting Death ".

This second chapter of Hebrews is a companion picture to the second chapter of Philippians. But though the subject matter—humiliation and glory—is the same in both cases, the manner of treatment and point of view are different. "He humbled himself," writes Paul, "and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." But the humiliation is followed by exaltation, and that by way of recognition and reward. "Wherefore, God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name."

Many authorities find that same thought in Hebrews. They refer the crowning with glory and honour to the exaltation. We are to see Jesus crowned with glory and honour in the post-resurrection life of heaven. But why, it may be asked, why should the text be read through Pauline spectacles? Hebrews has suffered too much and too long from such reading. The author was not a Paulinist. And why should we do violence to the natural reading and order of the text? There is no answer to Bruce's question, "What clear satisfactory sense can one attach to the statement that Jesus was exalted to heaven in order that He might taste death for every man?" The difficulty is obvious, and many and varied are the explanations and expedients which have been put forward to meet and circumvent it. A pause, a parenthesis, the omission of words, the insertion of words, a change of order, a change of tense, new and forced translations! Of these expedients the best in Peake's opinion is that which inserts the phrase, "Which he suffered" (Bleek).[1] The text then runs, "We see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour with a

[1] So also Davidson and Robertson Smith.

view to the suffering of death, *which He suffered* that by the grace of God He might taste death for every man". That yields a "clear and satisfactory sense", but how clumsy and redundant! What a solecism! And why should we rewrite a perfectly straightforward text, when there is no textual corruption and its meaning is absolutely clear?

Professor Peake admits that the interpretation which finds a glory in the humiliation is the natural explanation of the Greek, and yet he refuses to accept it. In his view the decisive factor is the requirement of the argument. The argument requires, he holds, that we should see something in the nature of dominion, and this he insists can only be found when the "crowning" is taken as subsequent to death, and as equivalent to the exaltation at God's right hand.

We must indeed defer to the argument, but it must first of all be more accurately defined. "Dominion" is not quite the point, and certainly not the immediate point. The difficulty of the readers was not with the dominion of the Son in itself, but how to reconcile that dominion with His sufferings and death. What is therefore required in the argument is something that will break down that contradiction and light up the darkness of the humiliation from within.

Now when the crowning with glory and honour is thought of as subsequent to the death, a radiance from heaven is no doubt reflected upon the sufferings of Jesus, but it does not change the aspect of these sufferings. It is no sufficient answer to men feeling the shame and humiliation of the Cross to say, "Ah, but look at the glory afterwards". The humiliation still remains. But show

them a point of light in the sufferings themselves, and at once the burden and the shame are lifted. When Hebrews says, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man", he is pointing to something in the suffering of death that was not shameful or humiliating, but that was entirely glorious. The whole aspect of that suffering is changed when it is viewed not as a dark, untimely fate, but as a divinely commissioned task for the good of humanity.

Further, the thought of a "crowning" subsequent to death is entirely out of place at this point in the argument. The crowning would then be a symbol of victory. But so far there has been no hint of that in the passage. Nothing has been said of the issue of the death for every man, nothing of victory, and therefore nothing of exaltation or dominion. Such a reference would have involved the writer in anticlimax, and he is careful of his climaxes. He develops his argument in leisurely fashion, and does not unmask all his batteries at once. The glory of a divinely commissioned task—that is the first step in the argument, the first point of light. A gracious discipline for the perfecting of the Pioneer of our Salvation—that is the second; and still there is no word of dominion. Not till the third stage is reached does that appear. It comes in the fourteenth verse, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage". There we have dominion asserted, victory achieved, and the Lordship of Jesus established

in the very sphere where it was doubted and called in question, the sphere of His humiliation and death. After such victory it is quite in order that the writer should speak of the exaltation to the right hand of God, as he immediately proceeds to do. The argument of the passage runs out—that He might taste death and be perfected, that He might destroy and might deliver, and finally that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God. That is the fourth point of light for the readers. Through His experience of suffering and of temptation through suffering, Jesus the ever-living Lord and High Priest is able to succour the tempted, and thereby enable man to achieve his long-baffled lordship upon earth.

III

A Glorious Task—that is the first point of light in the darkness. And the second is like unto it—a Gracious Discipline, for the perfecting of the Pioneer of our Salvation!

"That by the gracious will of God He should taste death for every man." But how could that be? some might well ask. What possible connection could God or God's Son have with suffering and death? The thought was too shocking. The first disciples had the same difficulty. "That be far from thee, Lord," was Peter's instinctive response to the first announcement of the Cross. And in substance the answer of Hebrews to his friends is the same as that of our Lord to Peter, "Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men". Amongst the things of God, suffering has its own distinctive place. "It became him

for whom are all things and by whom are all things—who rules in Nature, Providence and Grace—in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

To bring the many sons to glory, to final salvation, was no easy task. They could not find the way for themselves. A leader was necessary, and for this Hebrews makes use of a special term—Archegos. According to Rashdall the Archegos was the leader of a Greek colony, who conducted immigrants into a new country, showed them the way into it and ruled them after their arrival in it.[1] That is exactly what the Archegos of our salvation had to do. He had to be a Pioneer, a Pathfinder; He had to break open a road through strange and undiscovered territory, and inaugurate a new and living way by which we might come to God (x. 20).

Like other Pioneers He had to suffer.

"For us the heat by day, the cold by night,
The inch-slow progress and the heavy load,
And death at last to close the long, grim fight
With man and beast and stone: for them the road.

"For them the shade of trees that now we plant,
The safe, smooth journey and the certain goal—
Yea, birthright in the land of covenant:
For us, day-labour, travail of the soul."

That was the means chosen by God to make Him perfect and complete in His vocation as Saviour. It became Him, it fitted in with the rest of God's ways, so to prepare Him for His task. The author does not further explain how this method is becoming to God. He has no rationale of suffering other than the practical

[1] *The Idea of Atonement*, p. 157.

one that it qualifies for whatsoever tasks God has in view. In the twelfth chapter we have it worked out at greater length in reference to the " sons " of God. To such as are exercised thereby it is the sure mark of a Father's love and a true sonship ; a gracious discipline, a moral gymnastic (the gymnastic of eternity, said the mystics), life-renewing and life-enriching, yielding as its fruit the peace and righteousness of a perfected character. Ripeness is all !

As with the " Many " so also with the One, the only begotten, the Pioneer, the Saviour. He too was made perfect through sufferings. How these qualified Him for leadership is not made clear at this point. There are many sufferers, but few leaders. A later statement makes it plain. " Son though He was, yet learned He obedience by the things which he suffered." His perfecting was a moral perfecting, a perfecting through obedience ; and being made perfect He became the Author of eternal salvation and its Pioneer. His moral supremacy gave Him the leadership (v. 9). " The sonship was there perfect all along ; yet something came to pass, something was developed in the humanity of the Lord in each successive outcoming of the obedience of sonship under suffering ; something which the Father had desired to see in humanity and now saw, and which the incarnation, simply as such, had not accomplished, but which was being accomplished as the life of the Son in humanity progressed under the Father's educating of Him as the Captain of our salvation."[1] " We miss the point of the life of Christ, if we look upon Him as a ready-made Saviour."[2]

[1] McLeod Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, p. 257.
[2] James Reid, *The Victory of God*, p. 26.

But why, it might further be asked, why just that way? Why the Via Crucis as the Via Perfectionis? Was there no other way, less costly, less hard?

No, answers Hebrews; there was no other way. The Son must take the human way and share the human lot. The *Sanctifier and the Sanctified*, the Saviour and the Saved, the Son and the sons *are all of one*, have all one origin in God, and therefore are all of one stock, one company, one family.[1] The coming of Jesus in the flesh did not make Him their brother: He was their brother before He came, and on earth He was not ashamed to acknowledge them as brethren. He called them so quite openly "in the midst of the congregation". He took His stand alongside of them, and joined with them in their praise and in their trust and in their offering of themselves to God. He shared their lot, and since suffering is the common lot, the badge of the race, He took His share in that also. There could be no exemption for the Son, the Sanctifier, the Pioneer. The Via Crucis was the only way. Son though He was, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. Made perfect through sufferings!

[1] cf. Denney in discussing Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*. "If, however, satisfaction is to be rendered at all, it must be by a human being, one of the same stock with the sinner. The emphasis laid by Anselm on this point is not to be ignored. It may be due to a peculiarity of Germanic law, according to which only the fellow tribesmen of an offender were allowed to make satisfaction for him; the act of satisfying proceeding on the basis of a natural unity existing between the performer and him for whom the performance was done. But it may also be due—though Anselm is supposed to be arguing on grounds of pure reason and with no debt to revelation—to the unconscious influence of the New Testament idea that the Saviour and the saved are all of one (Heb. ii. 11)." —*The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 70.

IV

A glorious task! A gracious discipline! And now Victory and Deliverance! Jesus proved His brotherhood by taking part in our nature and in our experience. And with a definite purpose in view; for in Hebrews the Incarnation is never regarded as an end in itself. Here in our nature Jesus found the opportunity to do His saving work as was not possible from the outside.

> "No extra-mural God; the God within
> Alone gives aid to city charged with sin."

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers in blood and flesh, He also himself in like manner took part in the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

"Through death" it is said—death, that is, as part of the human lot. The theory was that death was introduced into the world by the devil out of envy. "God created man to be immortal," says Wisdom, "and made him to be an image of his own eternity. Nevertheless through envy of the devil came death into the world: and they that do hold of his side find it. But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them" (ii. 23 f). So that in the death and resurrection of Jesus the devil's own creation, his own choice weapon, is turned against himself and made the instrument of his destruction. Scholars point out that "to have the power of" anything (with the genitive in Greek) is expressive of

lordship in that particular sphere. Here, then, the Lord of Death is met by Jesus on his own ground and robbed of his lordship.

The passage is full of echoes. There is the Old Testament background in the Songs of the Servant in Isaiah. "Shall the prey be taken from the Mighty? or the captive of the Terrible be delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the Mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the Terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save the children" (xlix, 24, 25). "Because his soul was delivered up to death, therefore he shall inherit many, and shall divide the spoil of the strong" (liii. 12, LXX).[1] There are the Pauline references —to death as "the last enemy", personified almost as a demon (1 Cor. xv. 26); to the World-Powers overreaching themselves in the crucifixion (1 Cor. ii. 8); and to Christ's open exposure of them and triumph over them in the Cross (Col. ii. 15). Nearer still is the memory of Him "who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him" (Acts x. 38). But clearest of all—the parable of the Binder of the Strong. The Strong Son of God has entered the house of the demons, has bound the Lord of the House (Beelzebul), and spoiled it of its goods (Mark iii. 22). Later still we have the Johannine echo, "Now is the judgment of this world, and now shall the Prince of this world be cast out" (xii. 31).

Jesus asserts His Lordship through death, and delivers the captives who through fear of death were

[1] cf. Hoskyns, *Riddle of the N.T.*, pp. 170, 253. Bacon, *Jesus and Paul*, p. 119.

all their lifetime subject to bondage. Of that old fear which so obsessed the ancient world—of death and what lay beyond it, "after death the judgment"—we now have little conception. "We have never been thoroughly frightened," says Edwyn Bevan, "the ancient world was frightened, there is the difference. . . . The philosophic writers labour, for instance, with what seems to us unnecessary persistence to fortify men against this fear. Perhaps the finest part of the poem of Lucretius is his passionate argument why men should not fear death. . . . To such a mood the announcement of the resurrection of Jesus must have brought a thrill difficult for us to realise—the supreme Dread not only met but actually defeated within the world men knew."[1]

There is no mention of the resurrection in our passage; but it is presupposed throughout, as also in the picture of the heavenly High Priest which immediately follows. It is to that Victory over death and its lord, and not to any thought of Christ's death as an atonement for sin, that the deliverance from fear is to be attributed. Jesus is the Conqueror of death, and thereby Lord in the World to Come.

V

This brings us to the last point in the writer's Apologia for the sufferings of Jesus, and to its crown.

"Wherefore it behoved Him"—He owed it as a debt—"in all things to be made like unto His brethren,

[1] *Hellenism and Christianity*, p. 81.
Robertson Smith notes how the Rabbinical theology speaks of the fear of death and the accuser as a constant companion of man's life. In every dangerous crisis of life, on a lonely journey, or on the high seas, the Jew seemed to see the accuser pleading for his death. "In this life," says the Midrash Tanchuma, "death never suffers man to be glad." (*Expositor*, ii : 3 : 74.)

that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted He is able to succour them that are tempted."

In the ancient world the Priest was the central and the essential figure in religion, and in the writer's presentation of Jesus as the great High Priest all the other pictures of the Son are taken up and crowned. There is much that is attractive to gallant hearts in the thought of Jesus as Pioneer of Salvation. But He is more than Pioneer. "Sanctifier" goes deeper, and touches the fringe of the priestly sphere. But Jesus is more than "Sanctifier". More, too, than Conqueror, Deliverer and Lord. He is the Merciful and Faithful High Priest, the central figure in the World to Come.

And with this development in the representation of Christ's person there goes a corresponding deepening and enrichment of the thought of salvation. The tasting of death for every man, the breaking open of the new and living way, the sanctifying of the people, the deliverance from bondage to the fear of death, are all viewed as leading up to and receiving their crown in the work of atonement and forgiveness. That for Hebrews is the heart of the matter. For the last and greatest word of Christianity is not Victory, but Reconciliation. And the Lord who sits at God's right hand is not the Lord of Might only, but the Lord of Grace—a Priest for Ever.

"To make expiation for the sins of the people"—the fundamental work of a priest. The Revised Version has "to make propitiation"; but neither in the LXX

nor in the New Testament can such a translation be maintained.[1] Under the covenant there could be no thought of propitiation. What is involved is deliverance for men from the guilt of their sins. For the moment, however, the deeper doctrine of the priesthood is not pressed. The point made is that in order to become a merciful and faithful High Priest Jesus had to share His brethren's lot—had to be made like unto them in all things. That lot is thought of mainly as one of suffering and temptation. Through these Jesus acquired that sympathy with the needs of the people, that understanding of their difficulties, which is the first requisite in the work of mediation.

The immediate reference is to the temptations. "For in that he himself was tempted in the things that he suffered he is able to succour them that are tempted" (cf. page 97). Suffering was the sphere in which these Christians were being tempted to apostatize from the living God. Jesus had been tempted in the same sphere, and had been found faithful. So that having suffered and having passed through death and taken His place at the right hand of the throne, He is now a merciful and faithful High Priest, and able to send help to His brethren in their time of need.

So ends the apology for the sufferings and death of Jesus, and the proof of His Lordship. The readers of the epistle were troubled about that Lordship. They could see nothing but shame and dishonour and humiliation in the sufferings and death of the Son. Hebrews

[1] cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, p. 93 f; also his *Commentary*, Romans iii. 25.

would have them look a little deeper. He admits the humiliation, but shows them that there was glory in it as well—the crowning glory of a great task, undertaken in obedience to the will of the Father, and a gracious discipline for His perfecting in that task. Victory, too, and deliverance for the captives. Above all the mediation of forgiveness to the sinful, and help to the tempted. Jesus was Lord in the World to Come, and so much more. And not in spite of His sufferings and death, but because of them and through them.

So also, we may say, ends the homily on the eighth psalm. Man's lordship is not yet made perfect. Not yet do we see all things put under his feet; but we see Jesus crowned, perfected, victorious and compassionate at God's right hand; and seeing Him we can send our hearts a little further than our eyes, and believe that through His grace and by His help we too shall achieve that lordship which is our appointed heritage.

CHAPTER VI

OVER GOD'S HOUSE

WE come to the second of the great comparisons between the mediators of the covenants, the contrast between Jesus and Moses (Ch. iii–iv). In the opening sentence the readers are asked to consider, to fix their attention upon Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of their confession, and more particularly upon His fidelity in these two spheres. That is the point on which the comparison turns. Neither the mission nor the priesthood of Jesus is fully discussed. The writer has another matter that must be disposed of first. His great concern is with the "House" to which the Mediators belong. He is terribly anxious about the loyalty of its members, and till he has relieved his mind on that point he cannot proceed with his argument. His anxiety is like an intermittent fever that breaks out and interrupts the natural development of his thought (cf. ii. 1, iii. 6, v. 11, x. 26). Here, however, it is not so much an interruption as the whole argument. The passage is an impassioned appeal for loyalty.

I

"My servant Moses, who is faithful in all mine house." That faithfulness is set against the dark background of Miriam's and Aaron's rebellion (Num. xii). The house is described as God's house; and the reference is not to any material structure, but to the household, the living community, the house of Israel, the people

of God. The house has had a long and noble history, and the author rejoices in its great traditions of faith and heroism (Ch. xi), and dwells with evident pride upon the work of its first great organiser.

"Faithful, in *all* mine house", in every department of it! Moses was God's first Apostle, first Messenger to Israel. In the chapter in which he is described as faithful God speaks to him mouth to mouth, directly, openly and with no dark sayings; whereas to the prophets He only does so in visions and in dreams (Num. xii, cf. Deut. xxxiv. 10). He is more than a prophet. He is the first Hebrew Priest, though only in one place in the Old Testament is he so called (Ps. xcix). In the tabernacle God speaks to him face to face, as a man speaks to his friend, and there he is the intermediary through whom God makes known His will when the people come to him to inquire of God—one great function of the priest as the organ of revelation (Exod. xxxiii). There also he judges between a man and his neighbour, and declares to them the statutes and directions of God. That is to say, he legislates, and legislates as priest, and in so doing creates the nucleus of Hebrew law (Exod. xviii). At the inauguration of the covenant he offers sacrifice and consecrates the altar and the people in the blood of sacrifice—a purely priestly function (Exod. xxiv). Similarly at the consecration of Aaron and his sons he performs the same priestly rites (Exod. xxviii).[1] He is Apostle and High Priest, priest and priest-maker; and as priest, judge and judge-maker (Exod. xviii). In every department, as apostle and

[1] cf. Buchanan Gray, *Sacrifice in the O.T.*, and his interesting chapter, "The Mosaic Priesthood".

priest, lawgiver and judge, leader and commander—faithful. Amid all the murmuring and bickering and rebelling of the people—faithful. Later, we are shown the secret of it all, "he endured as seeing Him who is invisible".

Now, consider Jesus, in the same rôle and sphere. "Who is faithful to Him that appointed him", that is, as Apostle and High Priest.[1] Jesus is like Moses in His fidelity, and the sphere of His fidelity is the same—God's House. "*Whose house are we*", contends the writer. There are not two houses, two peoples, one Jewish and the other Christian. There is but one house, one people, one family, one Church—God's; and it retains its identity through all the generations. As with the Covenant and the Revelation there is no breach of continuity. The Church in the Wilderness is one with the Church in Rome; brethren called to be saints in Rome one with the fathers called out of Haran and Egypt. All are of Abraham's seed, heirs together of the same great promises and called to share in the same heavenly glory. This thought of the identity and continuity of the house or people throughout the generations is fundamental to the epistle.

So far there is agreement. Moses and Jesus are alike faithful as Apostle and High Priest in God's house. But now differences begin to emerge.

1. Both had great glory in God's house. And as Davidson points out, their glory was not something lying outside the sphere of their labours, but just the glory of the sphere itself and of their respective positions and tasks within that sphere—in other words, the glory

[1] For the "appointment" we have to wait. It is the equivalent of the "crowning" in ii. 9 and of the "call" in v. 4—all of them made plain in the "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" of x. 7.

of being Apostle and High Priest (cf. v. 5). But of Jesus it is said, "This man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who hath founded the house hath more honour than the house". Obviously the Founder's glory is greater than that of the house or of any servant within the house. How Jesus founded the house is not made clear. The writer remarks parenthetically that every house is founded by someone, and that He who built all things is God. God made the worlds through the Son, and the founding of the house may therefore be thought of as included in the work of the Son in Creation. But the Son may also be thought of as founder through His work of Redemption, and this with greater relevance to the mind and thought of Hebrews. The house is a new, a spiritual creation, a people sanctified in Jesus' own blood (xiii. 12). His self-offering through eternal spirit is regarded as effecting retrospectively the redemption of transgressions under the first covenant (ix. 15). That offering reaches back through the centuries, and underlies the work of all the forerunners. From the point of view of history we may think of the house as having its beginning in the redemption from Egypt, and its formal constitution in the covenant sacrifice at Sinai; but *sub specie aeternitatis* in the (eternal) redemption through the Son. The greater glory of the founder thus becomes the priestly glory of sacrifice as in Chapter II and Chapter V.

2. Moses was faithful in all God's house, but only as a servant. It is true that he was not an ordinary slave, but a trusted and confidential servant with whom God could commune face to face; so great a servant, indeed, that his faithfulness could afterwards be reckoned as a

testimony to the higher revelation that was to come. But still he was only a servant, one under authority; never acting on his own initiative, but always "according to all that the Lord commanded". "Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant; but Christ"—so named for the first time in the epistle—"as a Son over God's house." Bengel's comment is to the point, "Moses yields to Him. An ambassador, in the absence of the king, is very highly distinguished—in the presence of the king he falls back among the multitude." As a *Son* over God's house, and soon to be recognised as "a great priest over the house of God"! Christ is the Head of the house, just as with Paul He is the head of the body, the Church. As Head He has full power and authority over the household and its members and affairs. His function it is to order and control, as also to make provision for the needs of the household. And as His responsibility is greater than that of any servant, so also is His faithfulness. There are deeper elements in the fidelity of a Son than in that of a servant.

The thought of His fidelity is not developed here, but already we have had a hint of it. We see it in the Son's successful resistance to temptation (ii. 18), and, later, it is shown to us in His obedience, His refusal to desert His brethren and betray His trust (v. 7), and in His enduring of the Cross and despising of its shame (xii. 2). The Son was faithful unto death. All that we can see; but there is more. What Hebrews points to is not His past but His present faithfulness, "Who *is* faithful to him that appointed him". The Son's "appointment" did not end with death, nor did His faithfulness. The fidelity on earth is not forgotten; but,

as with his sympathy, it is transferred to heaven. For the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever (John viii. 35). He abideth ever, and He abideth faithful—a great High Priest over the house of God, over the whole family in heaven and on earth.

II

The mention of the faithfulness of Jesus and of Moses in God's house brings all the writer's apprehensions regarding his brethren to a head. They were making him afraid, as the Galatians made Paul afraid. Was their loyalty to be trusted? "Whose house are we, *if* we hold fast the glad fearlessness and glorying of our hope." To lose their courage and their hope would be fatal. That was how Israel had failed. He is still thinking of the narratives in Numbers. After the record of Moses' faithfulness there comes the story of the spies, Israel's loss of nerve, their great refusal, God's oath of exclusion and the forty years of wandering (Num. xiii–xiv). God forbid that such a tragedy should befall his friends! So he turns to them with a solemn note of warning and appeal. Let them listen to God speaking to them:

" . . . To-day, if ye will hear His voice,
Harden not your hearts as in the Provocation,
in the day of Temptation in the wilderness:
When your fathers tempted me, proved me,
and saw my works forty years.
Wherefore I was grieved with that generation,
and said, They do always err in their hearts;
and they have not known my ways.
So I sware in my wrath,
They shall not enter my Rest."

The words are from the ninety-fifth psalm. It opens with a burst of praise and a call to worship. "O come let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker as a nation and our Shepherd as a people." Then follows the appeal for loyalty as above; Israel must not prove an apostate nation. The psalm has been described as a lyric of Israel's renaissance after the Exile. That was the opening of a new day for Israel. The air was full of prophetic voices charged with hope and expectation, and ever summoning the people to their new destiny. The situation was very similar for these Christians. They, too, were living in God's new day, the day of Christ. A new age had dawned; on them had come "the consummation of the ages" (ix. 26). God had spoken in His Son, and His voice was sounding in their ears, proclaiming the great salvation. It was a day for hope and rejoicing, not for doubts and fears; a day for uplifted hearts and alert minds; for courage and resolution and progress. Actually it was a day of trial and temptation, as for the people in the wilderness—"the everlasting crisis commonly called to-day". But when God says "To-day", it means a day of grace and opportunity as well.[1] Let them make the most and not the worst of it. "The Past gone, seize To-day." "When you hear His voice harden not your hearts."

Such hardening of the heart was a possibility not to be overlooked. "Take heed, therefore, lest there be in any of you a wicked unbelieving heart moving you to apostatize from the living God." Here the fateful word is uttered, "Apostasy", of which the writer

[1] cf. Emerson's poem, *Days*.

cannot think without a shudder. And here it is traced to a bad heart, a heart of unbelief. In this our author but follows the lead of the Old Testament. Over and over again from prophet and psalmist there comes the reproach, "And ye believed Him not, nor hearkened to His voice". Israel's refusal to enter Canaan is taken as the supreme example of unbelief. "It seems to have become a kind of penitential tradition in Israel."[1] And to Hebrews it seemed as if the same dire fate might overtake his friends—they, too, might perish through unbelief. All unconsciously they were departing from the living God.

There does not appear to have been much of a theoretic nature in the unbelief of these Christians. Some of them were attracted by a variety of novel doctrines (xiii. 9), but in the main they were holding by their old beliefs—too much so (vi. 1). We see its true nature if we consider its opposite—faith. For Hebrews faith is a triumphant assurance as to God and Christ and the Unseen; an assurance that acts as a spur and makes all ventures possible. Unbelief is that hardening of the heart which unnerves the soul, and makes all ventures, all progress, all advance into the promised land impossible. What the writer fears is not any sudden lapse, or any open break with Christianity; but a gradual hardening, a moral sclerosis, through the deceitfulness of sin. "Sin" is that which easily besets, or speciously attracts (xii. 1); it deceives, it tempts. (They were being tempted through sufferings.) It takes advantage of our natural love of ease, of our dislike of hardships and new ways. New duties and responsibilities are shunned; difficulties are

[1] D. M. Baillie, *Faith in God*, p. 15.

magnified; the heart is overcome, as were the spies, by the outward size and shows of things. Things unseen grow dim and lose their hold. Gradually, unconsciously, the heart is more and more inclined to take the soft and easy road, and less and less ready to respond to the voices of God's new day, to the demands of duty and the call of Christ. That was what the writer feared, a hardening of the heart, a thickening of the moral tissue, a clouding of the inward vision, a failure of nerve, a loss of faith, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin—a process which could only end in open disloyalty and positive disobedience, in refusal to hear God's voice and to act on His word.[1]

The danger was very great; and the author calls upon his friends to rally to his side and to help one another in meeting it. In their daily gatherings they are to exhort, to warn and encourage one another, as he is now exhorting them, lest any of them be overtaken by the fate which befell the house of Israel. They are members of the house of God and members one of another. They must not stand aloof in selfish isolation or in fancied superiority; but must consider one another and help and warn each other (cf. x. 24, xii. 15).

"For we become partakers of Christ, *if* we hold fast to the end the confidence with which we started." The translation "fellows" of Christ, companions, partners with Christ, of which Dr. Bruce was so fond, is possible (cf. i. 9); but somewhat inadequate and out of line with the passage as a whole. Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren, but in God's house He is not quite our fellow-member. He is over the house, its Head and High

[1] Where the A.V. has only one word—unbelief, the original has two—unbelief and disobedience. For the latter cf. iii. 18, iv. 6, 11. Disobedience is unbelief carried into action, as obedience is faith in full activity.

Priest. We are not on His level. We may have a part in the work of the house, but we cannot share the responsibilities of its Head. We are not His fellows in the achieving of salvation, or in the ordering and providing for the household. There, He is always the Giver and we the unworthy receivers, dependent on His bounty and partakers of His grace at every turn. To partake of Christ is to partake of His benefits. And we only partake as we hold fast to the end the confidence (*hypostasis*), the faith, with which we started. In the mechanics of faith the action is reciprocal: we only partake as we hold fast, and we can only hold fast as we partake of Him and His grace.

"To the end!" They had started well, and the writer cannot forget the promise of their early days. In the last issue he bases all his hopes of better things for them on that fine beginning—that, and God's faithfulness (vi. 10, x 32). But he has a regard for the end—a mental habit of his. Things in process must work themselves out somehow, and what is to be their end? That is what matters—the last Act. The joyful start, with banners flying and trumpets sounding—that is fine; but, ah, the long weary trudge, the disappointments, failures and delays, with the goal still out of sight! To hold fast to the very end, that is the vital matter; for only then is their place in God's house and their share in its blessings assured. Think of those wilderness folk. They left Egypt with high hopes. Yet at their first contact with difficulty and danger their hearts failed them. They could not hold fast the confidence with which they started. They could not enter in because of unbelief. Beware, then, of that bad heart.

Hold fast. Let not what began best end worst; nor what God blest once prove accurst.

III

They must maintain their confidence and their glad fearlessness. Of one thing only must they be afraid—of missing the promised rest. "Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest any one of you should be judged (convicted) to have come short of it" (iv. 1). So far there has been no promise, only warnings and entreaties. But the author manages to wrest a promise in masterful fashion from the very oath that excluded the unbelieving. God had sworn in His wrath that some should not enter His rest. That implied that others should, that it was the real purpose of God that His rest should be shared by His people. The promise was there after all, reinforced by God's oath; and though those to whom it was first offered had failed to take advantage of it, it had never been recalled and the rest was still open. For here was God speaking to them in David, in the psalter, and saying, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice harden not your hearts."

That voice, that word, that promise now falls on our ears, says the writer, with an added richness of meaning. We are living in the new day of God's Son, and the rest of which it speaks is the Christian salvation. We have had the gospel preached to us, but we must not presume upon that fact. The people of the Exodus also had the gospel; but "it did not profit them, since it was not blended with faith in the hearts of them that heard it". They came short through unbelief, and so

may we. Therefore let us fear. Let us meet God's word with true and believing hearts. For " we who have believed "—let there be no mistake or doubt on that point—" We who have faith do enter in, are sure to enter in to Rest ".

Rest, My Rest, God's own Rest! Obviously Joshua did not give the people rest. He led them into the promised land; but that was not their true rest, though in a sense it prefigured it. Much more was involved in the promise than a settled life in Canaan and the enjoyment of its fruits. What it meant was a rest, a life in God's presence, fellowship and service. And this, in turn, involved and suggested a higher fulfilment still. The true rest, says Hebrews, is God's own rest, the rest on which He entered at Creation and which He for ever enjoys. " And God rested from all His works on the seventh day." That rest was the rest of the living God, " ever active in putting Himself forth to men, and all-responsive to their putting of themselves forth to Him " (Davidson); not the rest of inactivity therefore, but rest in achievement, in fulfilment, in satisfaction and in joy, when God saw everything that He had made and behold it was very good. Of that rest the earthly counterpart and shadow was the Sabbath, a rest in the worship and service of God, a type, said the Rabbis, of the world to come. And that, says, Hebrews, is the rest that remaineth, that is reserved for the people and household of God. A *Sabbatismos*, he calls it—a coinage of the writer's own;[1] a rest over and above all earthly rests and joys, a Sabbath-rest in God, a Sabbath-rest with God.

[1] Moffatt notes that the only other reference, in Plutarch, is doubtful.

Concerning this there are two questions that require to be answered. First, Does it refer to a present or to a future blessedness of the people of God? Can it be entered now, or must they wait for it till Christ comes, or until they are released by death? The answer is two-fold. The rest belongs to the higher world, the world to come. It has always existed and is always open; and we who have believed do enter into rest, and enter now. The great salvation does not belong entirely to the future. There is a present rest with God and in God's love and service—"a Sabbath of the heart", as Wordsworth called it.

> "O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
> O calm of hills above,
> Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
> The silence of eternity,
> Interpreted by love!"

But that does not exhaust its meaning, and the immediate reference in the passage is to the future life. We are here on pilgrimage, and though glimpses of it come to us by the way our true rest is not here. "He only enters into rest", says our author, "who has ceased from his labours, as God did from His". In its fullness it belongs to the heavenly world, to Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem, where rest the spirits of just men made perfect. Not till Christ shall raise them thither can the people of God enjoy the rest that crowns all labour, the Sabbath-rest with God.

Out of this arises the second question. Is this an entirely satisfactory conception of the future life? Granted that there is an end to the sin and sorrow and striving of earth, is there also an end to achievement and

to progress; is there no more work to be done for God? Only to rest? The question has been discussed by two of our Gifford Lecturers, and with an interesting unanimity of result.

Professor Sorley asks, "How are we to conceive this communion with God in which the whole ethical life attains its perfection and passes into another form? The enterprise is over: goodness has been achieved: all beauty is in our presence; knowledge is swallowed up in sight. But does the beatific vision content us? . . . Experience does not fit a man for motionless ease; but for new endeavour. . . . It doth not yet appear what we shall be. But if free minds endure, it must surely be for a range of activity suited to the capacities and values which they have acquired in their mundane experience. And if, here or elsewhere, they attain that complete harmony between will and ideal in which moral perfection consists, they will surely be fitted thereby for nobler enterprise."[1]

Professor Taylor's answer is to the same effect. "To many imaginations, I believe, there is something repellent, or at least profoundly depressing, in the current representations of Heaven. It is made to appear as a region where there is no room for the *adventure* which is the very salt of life, the abode of a monotonous self-sameness of boredom. It is not every temperament that expresses itself in the words

> 'There remaineth a rest for the people of God,
> And I have had troubles enough, for one.'

But the conception of Heaven as adventureless is really unjustified. There is no sufficient reason why the dis-

[1] *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, p. 512 f.

appearance of wrong, within or without ourselves, should put an end to adventure or novelty. . . . To use the language of the devout imagination, the winning of heaven would not leave the pilgrim arrived at the end of his journey with nothing further to do. In heaven itself, though there would be no longer progress *toward* fruition, there might well be progress *in* fruition. . . . The blessed would always have new discoveries awaiting them, more to learn than they had already found out of the unspeakable riches of the wisdom of God, and these inexhaustible surprises would be won, as deeper insight is won here, by humility, trust and self-surrender, by letting self go, following an apparently paradoxical inspiration. Heaven—if a heaven indeed there is—we may safely say, must be a land of delightful surprises, not a country of Lotus-eaters, where it is always afternoon. And in the same way, if we are to think morally of Heaven, we should, I suggest, think of it as a land where charity *grows*, where each citizen learns to glow more and more with an understanding love, not only of the common King, but of his fellow-citizens."[1]

Such an answer would have no "surprises" for the author of Hebrews. Life, he says, is not here made perfect. We never see it at its best in this world; there is always something unexpressed and unfulfilled. And when God carries it to its end and perfects that which concerneth us it is to a share in His own life-rest, His eternal life and blessedness, in which there is no idleness, but a ceaseless outgoing of His power and of His grace. God's ends for us are always new beginnings. Other tasks, then, for other worlds—and other blessedness

[1] *The Faith of a Moralist*, 1 : 409, 408, 421.

too. His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His face.

> "And, doubtless, unto them is given
> A life that bears immortal fruit
> In those great offices that suit
> The full-grown energies of heaven."

There remaineth a Sabbath-rest to the people of God. Let us therefore labour, let us be eager to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through the same sort of disobedience. Entrance is not to be taken for granted. "Let us labour . . . for the Word of God is quick and powerful." In dealing with His word, His promise, we are face to face with God Himself. His word partakes of His livingness. "It is living and active." "No dead letter, this logos!" (cf. Luther's description of Paul's words as having "hands and feet", and Richter's account of Luther's own words as "half-battles"). "Sharper, too, than any two-edged sword; penetrating to the very division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow"—to the most secret places of the spirit's life; "scrutinising the very thoughts and purposes of the heart"—that evil heart of unbelief! The promise itself judges us. "And (turning from the word to God Himself) no created thing is hidden from Him; all things lie open and exposed (as were the necks of victims in sacrifice, or of criminals at execution) before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do in judgment." Let us therefore fear: let us therefore labour! These Christians had tasted the goodness of God's word (vi. 5); here they are reminded of its other side. "It is a fearful thing", say the Translators of the Authorised Version in their Preface to the Reader, "to fall into the

hands of the Living God, but a blessed thing it is, and will bring us to everlasting blessedness in the end, when God speaketh unto us to hearken; when He setteth His word before us to read it; when He stretcheth out His hand and calleth, to answer Here am I, here we are to do thy will O God."

To-day, if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts. A promise being left us. There remaineth a rest to the people of God. Let us therefore labour to enter that rest.

> "For all that moveth doth in change delight:
> But thenceforth all shall rest eternally
> With Him that is the God of Sabaoth hight:
> "O! that great Sabaoth God, grant me that sabbath's sight!"

IV

One last motive for faithfulness is now adduced by the writer. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the son of God, let us hold fast to our confession"—that public confession of faith which we made at the start of our Christian career. (Here, the Head of God's house is recognised and designated as the great High Priest in the heavens, just as at the end of the previous comparison the "Lord" becomes the High Priest; and the way is now clear for the consideration of the writer's fundamental conception.) Hold fast, "for we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin". Much has been said by way of warning and entreaty as to the example of unbelief and apostasy in the house of God. Here they are given

a word of encouragement; for here is the example of one—and He the great Head of the house—who has passed through the same fire of temptation which they are being called to face, and that without wavering and without sinning. Through that experience He can sympathise with them in their infirmities (cf. p. 150). The great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, has passed through the heavens to the right hand of the throne; but He feels and knows and understands and He *is* faithful. He will not forget.

> "Though now ascended up on high,
> He bends on earth a brother's eye;
> Partaker of the human name,
> He knows the frailty of our frame."

Let us therefore draw near—"O come let us worship"—with boldness to the throne of grace, that, hard-pressed as we are, we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in our time of need.

CHAPTER VII

A PRIEST FOR EVER

THE picture of Jesus presented to us in Hebrews is in reality a Triptych, to which the panel of the Priesthood, though it comes last in the order of the chapters, is central. It stands out in relief; and the side panels of the "Lordship" and the "Household" are turned towards it, as if contributory to it and finding in it their fulfilment.

In Chapter II everything, as we have seen, leads up to the statement, "that he might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God". The figures of the "Pioneer" and the "Sanctifier" are little more than suggestions, sketches in outline. For their fulfilment we have to turn to the central panel. It is the High Priest who breaks open the road and inaugurates the new and living way into the presence of God. It is the High Priest who sanctifies the people with His own blood. Jesus is more than the Conqueror of death and the Deliverer from its fear—more than Lord. The last and greatest word of Christianity is not Victory, but Reconciliation—a priestly word and a priestly task; and it is as High Priest that the *Lord* sits down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

And similarly with the other panel in the third and fourth chapters. The Son is described as the Founder of the House of God, and as faithful in the same. But not till we turn to the great High Priest over the house

do we see Him carrying out His redemptive work in the house and for the house, and proving His fidelity as Son. Believers are said to enter into rest, and it is stated that Joshua did not give them rest. Who did? We expect a statement that Jesus did, but none is forthcoming. The point is taken up later and developed under the Priesthood. The High Priest is our Forerunner, and He it is who leads the people into the Rest of God. All the unfinished elements in the other panels are brought to completion and crowned in the great priestly work of Jesus.

The conception has all the interest of novelty. Hints of it are to be found in Romans (viii. 34), in Revelation (i. 13), and in the prayer of the Supper-Room in the Fourth Gospel; but apart from these references it stands alone in the New Testament. That it was a novelty to the readers of the epistle can be gathered from the writer's treatment of his theme. He does not break into the subject immediately, but throws out preparatory hints to waken their curiosity and interest (i. 3, ii. 17, iii. 1). He expects to have some difficulty in making it intelligible to them, and enters into it with what often appears to us as quite unnecessary detail. If the matter was already familiar to them (Moffatt), a commonplace, as Davidson holds, what need of such elaboration? The whole endeavour of the epistle is to get the readers to think out their Christianity afresh. They were being attracted by outside novelties (xiii. 9), and were losing interest in their religion, their minds dulled by too long a dwelling amidst the rudiments of the faith. Something more than a commonplace was needed to rouse them. A fresh and vital presentation of Christianity is

the very point of the epistle. "Come," it seems to say, "let us get out of the old ruts, and with God's help let us move on to something mature. Think of Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest of our confession."

That thought we may safely take as the writer's own discovery, "a flash of inspiration", as Moffatt says, "one of the notes of originality and insight which mark the writer's treatment and statement of the faith".

All the same we may quite legitimately enquire as to the source of his inspiration. The starting-point of his discussion is the picture of a King, a Lord, who is seen and hailed as a Priest in the 110th Psalm. That psalm, however, must have been read by him in the light of a very considerable volume of Jewish and Christian speculation. There was the Apocalyptic doctrine of the Heavenly Temple and of Heavenly Intercessors, angels, saints and martyrs, and in particular of "Michael, the merciful and long-suffering", the mediator and intercessor between God and man.[1] On the basis of the psalm the Messiah had been delineated as a new priest.[2] Philo had described the Logos as High Priest, and had identified the Logos with Melchizedek and possibly, adds Moffatt, the latter with the Messiah. Jesus Himself had spoken of the psalm, and the title "Lord" may be traced back to His discussion. Paul had used its opening phrase to picture the triumph of Christ in the resurrection. No other psalm is so

[1] Charles finds the oldest references to a temple in heaven in Test. Levi iii. 4, v. 1, xviii. 6. For the intercession of angels cf. Zech. i. 12, Enoch xl. 1–10, etc. Test. Levi. iii. 5, v. 6—of the departed righteous Enoch xlvii. 2 and of Michael, Enoch xl. 9 Test. Levi v. 6. "In the first century B.C. the belief in the intercession of angels was apparently general amongst the Pharisees" (Charles).

[2] Test. Reuben vi. 7 f., Levi xviii. 2.

frequently quoted in the New Testament. Of all this stream of interpretation and speculation Hebrews could scarcely have been ignorant. There was much to suggest the thought, but the "flash-point" was not reached until he had read the psalm in the light of the Gospel tradition. The psalm is used by him as a base from which to deploy his argument, but behind it there is always the memory of Jesus as He appeared in the days of His flesh. That is his real starting point. His picture, his theory, to call it so, is very far from being the artificial construction, the theological *tour-de-force* that many writers describe it to be. It is rather the outcome of his meditation upon the life, a natural reading of the facts, a recognition of priestly traits in the life and death of Jesus. Apart from such grounding in history the conception of the heavenly High Priest would be little more than a devout imagination. "Without those sacred years lived under Syrian skies the eternal life of the High Priest of humanity would be for us an infinite void, whence issued no light to our minds and no comfort to our hearts" (Bruce, p. 287).

I

What is a priest and what his qualifications?—that is the first question to which our author addresses himself (Ch. v). A priest, he says, is one who is set to minister for men in things pertaining to God; and that in effect means one who offers gifts and sacrifices for sins. So far as a man may he has to deal with God on behalf of men, and with men on behalf of God. He is a representative figure, and must have a standing in two worlds, the human and the divine. "The essence of the priest,"

says A. C. Benson, "is that he should believe himself, however humbly and secretly, to be in a certain sense between humanity and God. . . . He feels that he stands, like Aaron, to make atonement; that he is in a certain definite relation to God, a relation which all do not share; and that this gives him, in a special sense, something of the divine and fatherly relation to men. In the hands of a perfectly humble, perfectly disinterested man, this may become a very beautiful and tender thing. Such a man, from long and intimate relations with humanity, will have a very deep knowledge of the human heart. He will be surprised at no weakness or frailty; he will be patient with all perverseness and obduracy; he will be endlessly compassionate, because he will realise the strength and insistence of temptation; he will be endlessly hopeful, because he will have seen, a hundred times over, the flower of virtue and love blooming in an arid and desolate heart. He will have seen close at hand the transforming power of faith, even in natures which have become the shuddering victims of evil habit."[1]

Whether intentional or not that is a very beautiful and faithful paraphrase of our author's opening paragraph (v. 1–10). The first essential for a priest, he holds, is *Sympathy*. A priest has to deal with troubled souls, who through ignorance or weakness have erred and strayed from the ways of God. He is ministering in "divine things", and in the giving of counsel he has to be faithful. But he is also dealing with weak and suffering mortals, and he must enter with understanding and sympathy into the difficulties of their situation.

[1] *From a College Window*, p. 216.

Nothing that is merely "official" will avail: lack of sympathy nullifies the whole ministry. "Want of tenderness", said Dr. Johnson, "is want of parts"; and, according to Lord Bacon, "the nobler a soul is the more objects of compassion it hath".[1]

Now, says Hebrews, turning from the old régime to the new, "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin". Jesus had suffered, and He knew what it meant to be tempted through sufferings, as the writer's friends were being tempted. He had a heart and mind well schooled in trial, so that He could have a fellow-feeling for all in like circumstances. In that respect there could be no doubt as to His priestly qualification. When we read the passage we inevitably think of the sympathy shown by Jesus to the suffering and the sinful when He was upon the earth; and indeed the best illustration of the "Metriopathein",[2] the faithfulness and tenderness, of which Hebrews speaks, is the story of Jesus and the woman who was a sinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke vii. 36). But Hebrews is thinking not of earth, but of heaven, of sympathy in heaven. "And is there care in Heaven?"

"And didst thou love the race that loved not thee?
And didst thou take to heaven a human brow?
Dost plead with man's voice by the marvellous sea?
Art thou his kinsman now?"

[1] The motto carved in bold letters in the granite of Lord Morley's library mantelpiece.

[2] "To bear gently"; something measured; the mean between sentimentality and hardness, but with a special bearing upon the latter, between the "pathetic" and the "Nietzschean" fallacy; cf. "God is dead of pity for men" (Zarathustra).

The answer of Hebrews is a triumphant Yes! With the true intuition of faith he is very sure that Jesus took from earth to heaven eternal gain, and that as He was in the days of His flesh so is He now at the right hand of the throne. He has been through it all. He feels. He knows. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Professor T. H. Robinson, in the "Moffatt" Commentary (pp. 52–3), is persuaded that the essential doctrine of Hebrews is what may be called "Atonement by Sympathy". "The experience of Jesus", he says, "is the experience of God. . . . The Incarnation means the sympathy of God in Christ—an element in the divine life as eternal as God Himself. . . . The life and death of Jesus are, as it were, the eternal heart of God thrown for an instant on the screen of this world. Thus interpreted they tell us of a God-made reconciliation, attained in the only way in which it could be achieved. . . . His atonement is possible because He understands all human experience and has shown us in Jesus that He is not incapable of sympathising with our weakness, but does, in a very deep and real sense, undergo all that the sinner undergoes."

Now whatever of truth there may be in such a view of the Atonement it ought not to be attributed to Hebrews. Of that writer's belief in the vital sympathy of Jesus there need be no question. That is one of his "finds", one of the glories of the New Testament. But the sympathy to which he refers was learned on earth and carried back to heaven. It is the sympathy of our ascended High Priest, and the Son was not a

Priest before His coming to earth. The writer never relates the sympathy to God, or to the pre-incarnate Christ, or to the Incarnation. The first glimpse he gives us of Jesus is in his second chapter, where we see Jesus "crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He might taste death for every man". Salvation has its origin in the divine will. According to that gracious will there was committed to Jesus the glorious task of tasting death for every man, and it was in obedience to that will that He came to earth, saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." It is there that with McLeod Campbell we should find the "Key" to the Atonement.[1] So far as Hebrews has any doctrine of Atonement, it would be nearer the mark to describe it as "Atonement through Obedience" rather than through Sympathy; or more strictly "Atonement through Sacrifice, in obedience to the will of the Father".

This brings us to the second great qualification for priesthood. A true priest must have *a Sense of Vocation* (v. 4–10). This goes deeper than sympathy. Priesthood has an honour and glory of its own; not the accidents of power or position or fame or wealth which may attach themselves to the office and may attract men of lesser breed, but the unearthly glory of the task itself, of ministering for men in things divine. Such a task is not for everyone. Some inner fitness and necessity there must be, some higher initiative, some divine call. That alone legitimises. No man, no spiritually minded man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

[1] *The Nature of the Atonement*, p. 107.

" So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest " ; but God did when He called Him to the Cross. Jesus did not seek the glory of priesthood. It came to Him, says Hebrews, in the way of obedience to the will of God, and in saying so he has the full weight of the Gospel records behind him. There is nothing in the Gospels more notable than Jesus' sense of vocation. He was one who was " sent ". He *came* to do another's will. The glory of priesthood was not a prize that He snatched at. When confronted with the dread finality of sacrifice He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to God. . . . The reference is to the agony in Gethsemane, and the point of view is not quite the same as that of the Synoptists. What we have is not so much the shrinking of the flesh from the sufferings of the Cross, as the shrinking of the spirit from the last onset of temptation through these sufferings. Jesus prays with strong crying and tears to " Him who was able to save him from death ". The phrase is one of the writer's many striking circumlocutions for " God "—a literary usage rather than a Jewish reverential avoidance of the divine name. Jesus prays to God, the Almighty ; but it is *not* said that He prayed to be delivered from death. He had come to do His Father's will through sacrifice, and for Him there could be no deliverance, no yielding, no going back upon that. He had no fear of death, and He believed in the resurrection from the dead. His one fear, His godly fear, was lest He should be false to the heavenly will, and betray the task committed to Him. That was His Agony : that was His temptation. His prayer was really a cry for help and strength to do and

to bear, to finish the work His Father had given Him to do. And, adds Hebrews, He was heard in that He feared. His prayer was answered, and in the strength of it He went out to meet the Cross. The Fourth Gospel in its equivalent for the Agony, has the same view. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? Nay, for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again" (xii. 27).

For Jesus the will of God was neither a perfectly sealed nor yet a completely open book. Not till the situation was actually upon Him did He know what was required of Him. So we never find Him seeking to anticipate the divine will or to experiment with it; but ever waiting upon God, learning, growing in understanding through obedience to each new call, the Father's will ever becoming clearer to Him as each new opposition and antagonism was overcome. "Son though He was, yet learned He obedience through the things which He suffered." "He learnt all there was to know about obedience by suffering all there was to suffer."[1] Till at last in Gethsemane He gave Himself up in utter trust and peace to the wrath of men and the will of God. John gives us the "Tetelestai" from the Cross (xix. 30): Hebrews sets it here in the Garden. "Being made perfect", he says, "He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him."

Thus far, the qualifications for priesthood in general —Sympathy and Vocation—in each of which Jesus stands out in glowing pre-eminence. Now, for what

[1] McNeile. *N.T. Teaching in the light of St. Paul's*, p. 239.

is distinctive in His priesthood—"*A Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*" (Ch. vii.)

In explanation of the phrase we have a brief historical résumé, and a homily in the manner of the synagogue. Melchizedek, King of Salem, priest of the most high God, meets Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blesses him and receives tithes from him. Now, says Hebrews, consider the greatness of this man. Think of it—the patriarch Abraham, the conquering hero, offers to him a tenth of the spoils. In the person of their father Abraham the priestly sons of Levi are here found paying tithes to this great outsider. Think of it—Abraham the father of the race and the possessor of the promises kneels to this stranger, and receives from him his priestly benediction. Without a doubt the less is blessed of the better. Then in the levitical order the priests are mortals, but here is one of whom the testimony is that he liveth. So far as the record goes he seems to be without father or mother or genealogy. There is no record of his birth or of his death; he has neither beginning of days nor end of life. Apparently he abideth a priest continually. So that here in the order of Melchizedek you have a type of priesthood far more ancient and far superior to that of Aaron. And that is the order to which Christ belongs.

We read the chapter with a smile; it seems fanciful, fantastic even, and strangely arbitrary. But there is no necessity to be too superior. The writer's exegetical methods may not be ours, but when we come to freakish exegesis Hebrews has been more sinned against than sinning. "It must not be forgotten", says Professor Kennett, "that the lessons of Hebrew teachers were

habitually based, or to speak in Rabbinic language, hung on 'pegs' taken from the Old Testament, which, both teacher and pupils well knew, had no connexion whatsoever with the matter in hand. . . . A Jewish scholar was perfectly capable of discussing the historical interpretation of the Old Testament, the *peshat*, as the later Rabbis call it; but this seemed to him of minor interest compared with the *dérash*, the allegories and parables which might be read into or founded upon the words of Scripture taken out of connexion with their context."[1] As an instance of this fanciful treatment he quotes our author's reference to Melchizedek. A preacher's habit, and how strangely it persists! The "pegs", and the argument from silence are still with us; and why not? We may smile; but we should do so with understanding.

The point of the chapter is that in Christ a new order of priesthood has arisen. The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change in the law. The old system is set aside; the commandment on which it is based is disannulled because of its weakness and unprofitableness, and a better hope is introduced by which we draw nigh unto God. "After the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest." As we see him in Genesis, Melchizedek is King of Salem and priest of the most high God—a pagan, an outsider, without any of the legal or technical qualifications for priesthood, belonging to no priestly caste, according to Philo wholly self-learned and self-taught, his priesthood depending entirely upon the power of his personality. He has no predecessors and no successors. There is no record of his death. His priesthood is never recalled or annulled.

[1] R H. Kennett, *The Church of Israel*, p. 153.

"As we see him", says Davidson, "in that picture of him which is the portrait of another, he is a priest continually. Like a portrait he is always the same; he follows us with his eyes, a king and a priest, always alone, with no ancestry of priesthood before him, and none succeeding after him, always living." A shadowy figure, wraith-like, coming and going mysteriously, as if from another world! "Precisely!" says Hebrews: "that is just my point. The High Priest of whom I speak does belong to another world, but unlike Melchizedek He is no shadow. In Melchizedek you have the shadow, for he was made like unto the Son of God; but in Christ you have the reality. In Him you have a priesthood of a new order, or rather of the old eternal order, foreshadowed by prophet and psalmist alike. Our Lord, as you know, did not belong to any priestly tribe; He sprang out of Judah. And so He is a priest not by physical descent or by legal enactment, but entirely in His own right, in virtue of His gracious, holy character and personality. And He is further made so by the power of His indissoluble life. His was a life over which death had no power. He ever liveth. And so because He continueth ever He hath an unchangeable priesthood." For-ever-ness, absoluteness, finality, that is the outstanding mark of the new priesthood—a Priest for Ever, after the order of Melchizedek.

II

Thus far, the Personality of the great High Priest. We have now to consider His Work. And first of all *His Offering*. Hebrews interprets the work of Christ through the symbolism of Jewish sacrifice.

His starting-point is the Day of Atonement. For while he looks at other forms of sacrifice and thinks of Christ's death as the inauguration of the New Covenant, his main interest is in the Sin-Offerings of the great Day, the culmination of the sacrificial system. In the ritual of that day two things stand out in prominence. First, the Person of the High Priest. On that day he was the sole officiant. Everything, from the slaying of the victims (usually undertaken by the offerers or the priestly-levites) to the presentation of the blood within the Holiest, was carried through by him alone. He only had the right of entry within the veil, just for that day, and not without blood. The other point of importance was the application of the blood to the altar, and its sprinkling on or before the mercy-seat—the essential part of the sacrifice. The bodies of the victims were not laid upon the altar, nor was any portion of them partaken of by the High Priest. After the presentation of the blood they were taken to a separate place outside the camp and there burned.

That is the symbolism. But the interesting thing to notice is how the writer, when he comes to deal with the reality of which it speaks, immediately breaks through the symbolism and escapes. His picture is too big for the frame.

In considering that picture it will be sufficient to look at a couple of passages. Everything that is essential is brought before us in them.

1. We begin with what comes last in the epistle, the little homily based on the fortieth psalm (x. 5–18). This is a true instance of the last being first. As with many of the writer's sentences so also with his thought as

a whole—the emphatic word comes at the end. Bruce and Robinson hold that the author has finished his argument, and that what he gives us in the tenth chapter is really an extra, added by way of postscript and afterthought, because of "the benighted condition" of his readers (Bruce), and to give the argument a scriptural foundation (Robinson). But it is no postcript: it is essentially *a Frontispiece*. McLeod Campbell finds in it the Key-word to the doctrine of the Atonement; it is certainly the Key-word to the teaching of the epistle. In the earlier chapters we read of a consecration, appointment and call, of a task undertaken by Jesus, of His not glorifying Himself to be made a priest, and of an obedience learned by Him through sufferings. But to be fully understood these statements must be read in the light of the later declaration from the psalm, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."

The psalm is a thanksgiving for some great deliverance. The psalmist is poor and needy, and has no offering to bring to God but his willing and obedient heart. His commission is recorded in God's book, and Lo, he stands, ready to do God's will. That consecrated will is his one thank-offering, and how pleasing it is to God!

The psalm does not appear to carry any Messianic reference. Nevertheless Hebrews does not hesitate to make Jesus, in coming into the world, adopt the psalmist's declaration as His own. For the writer the initiative in our salvation lies entirely with God. It all runs back to that sovereign, gracious, reconciling will of His. "For while," to quote McLeod Campbell, "the immediate ground of our peace with God is the atonement . . . yet clearly it is that eternal will itself

which He came to do and which by doing it the Son has revealed . . . which is the ultimate peace and rest of our spirits ".[1] The ultimate ground! " By which will we are sanctified."

The coming of the Son to earth was the first step in that obedience which was perfected in Gethsemane and Calvary. There we have the assumption of His great priestly task—the Son not glorifying Himself to be made a Priest, but coming to do the Father's will in sacrifice. " There is nothing," says Denney, " in Christ's life and death of irresponsibility or adventure. It is all obedience and therefore it is all revelation."[2] It began as it ended with the Son saying " Amen " to the Father's holy will. It began as it ended with sacrifice. " The love that came into humanity had manifested its own nature even in coming into humanity —its self-sacrificing nature."[3] Everything in the Son's life thereafter was an implementing of that initial sacrificial obedience. The obedience on earth had its beginning in heaven. It had to be learned under the new conditions of earth, learned and perfected through sufferings; but it was the same obedience all the way through, to the same will and to the same end. And that end—the sacrifice of Himself. " A body hast thou prepared me! " That " happy misquotation " should not be made " unhappy " by too great literalness. Of the sacrifice of " bodies " Hebrews had more than enough. A man's body is just the instrument of his will. And what we have in the offering of the Son is therefore a fully expressed and perfected will—a sacrifice complete

[1] *The Nature of the Atonement* p. 109. [2] *The Death of Christ*, p. 213.
[3] McLeod Campbell, p. 109.

of body and of spirit—obedience carried, as we might say, to the last decimal, obedience unto death and through death. And there we touch the vital nerve of the Atonement. In that great "Amen" to the will of God from the heart of humanity, in that oneness of will with the will of the Father we touch what is final and absolute.[1]

2. In the second passage we have the thought of sacrifice worked out in detail. "For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" (ix. 13–14). Here the author's fashion of examining and pressing each word and phrase must be followed.

"*He offered Himself.*" "The sacrifice of Himself." The phrase, here and elsewhere in the epistle, ought, as Bruce says, to be written in large capitals. Christ's sacrifice was voluntary and complete; there was nothing held back. His whole personality was expressed in it. Our tendency is to dissect and analyse, to assign specific values to this and to that in the work of Christ—to His life, His sufferings, His death, His blood, His will, His spirit and so forth. But we are not saved by this or by that. What is of real value, of atoning value, is the offering as a whole—Himself. We cannot separate Him from His Cross. But it is Jesus who reconciles us to God—Jesus in His death, as Denney put it—by the sacrifice of Himself. Sacrifice at its Fullest!

"*Without Spot.*" This is added by the writer not

[1] In McLeod Campbell the "Amen" is given by Jesus to the righteous judgment of God on the sin of man (117); but that has no support in Hebrews.

by way of parallelism or to perfect his analogy. There was nothing in the absence of physical blemish in the sacrificial victims to suggest the deep moral purity of Jesus. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled; tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." And that we may be sure was an observation taken from life, a true and deep intuition of faith. Not a mere endowment but an ethical achievement; the achievement of a fully consecrated will, the offering of a perfected obedience. In that lay its virtue, Himself, without spot—Sacrifice at its Holiest!

"*The Blood of Christ.*" "By his own blood." Here we touch the heart of the matter. We have to remember that in the ancient world sacrifice was the universal language of religion: a language, a symbolism that was understood by everybody, and that was interpreted through the inherited understanding of centuries. To us it all seems strange and foreign and rather crude and barbarous. But it is in our notions that the crudity lies. In that old tongue blood spoke, and whether it was the blood of a covenant or a sin-offering, it always spoke the same thing. To us it speaks of death, but that was not its ancient meaning. Hebrews never uses the phrase "The Death of Christ" as we so often do by way of summary for His sacrifice. In the verses that immediately follow our passage he speaks of the death of a testator, which brings his will or testament into force. There he is speaking in legal terminology, and in law death ends all. But in sacrifice death is only the beginning of things. In sacrificial language "blood" is the essential, the active word. It speaks, and it speaks of life and not of death. "The blood *is* the life", not

the symbol of life; life that has passed through death, a risen life, as we might say; life enriched by death, set free and made operative by death—the really active element in sacrifice, that can be communicated and applied and appropriated. That is how it speaks: "the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel".

One other word it spoke. Always there was the giving of that which cost, and the offering of blood was the costliest of all. Too costly for many of the poor, and so there was provision in the law for offerings of another kind. Hebrews is careful to say, "*Almost* all things are by the law purged with blood". Yet there was cost even for the poorest.

In the blood of Christ, then, we have that which is living and life-giving; a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood, and offered at infinite cost. Sacrifice at its Costliest!

"*Through Eternal Spirit.*" Here the author is not describing the nature of the offering, but the medium through which it was offered, and the sphere to which it belonged. Through spirit, defined as eternal. *Spirit:* without the article, and therefore with no immediate reference to the Holy Spirit, or to Christ's own spirit or nature or personality or life. Spirit: in its absolute sense, as the last reality of all, as opposed to matter or flesh, and yet as using flesh for its instrument whereby to move the world. *Eternal:* as including time and duration and all their happenings and yet transcending them. Eternal: as belonging to the sphere of absolute and enduring validity.

The "magic phrase" glances at the sacrifice of the Cross in its earthly and temporal setting, but it refuses

to leave it there. What the writer sees in the Cross is something more than the doings of men, something more than an event in human history. The Eternal was manifested there. Our author will have "no shallow village-tale" as history. It is not enough for him to say Bethlehem, Nazareth, Gethsemane, Calvary. Not for him the relativities of time and space. All through that history time was filled with eternity. He sees the Cross as in time, yet not of it; as lifted above it—"Towering o'er the wrecks of Time"—and set in the eternal order to which all times belong. Not an affair of yesterday merely, but of to-day and for ever; not of earth but of heaven; with the heart of the Eternal in it, and most wonderfully kind. "Who through His own blood and through eternal spirit offered Himself without spot to God." Sacrifice in the Highest!

III

And to what end or purpose? The epistle speaks in general terms of salvation, reconciliation, redemption; but more directly of the putting away of sin. "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (ix. 26). In the main, sin is regarded as an obstacle lying in the way and blocking the path to man's communion with God. An obstacle, moreover, lying wholly within men's hearts and consciences—a very definite, concrete thing, which each man knows for himself, through his consciousness of guilt before God—an obstacle which can be removed only by cleansing or forgiveness.

"If the blood of bulls and of goats . . . sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the

blood of Christ . . . purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" From dead works! At first sight it is tempting to take this as referring to the formal and empty observances of religious routine. There must have been many in Paganism as well as in Judaism who felt the futility of the sacrificial system, felt that its works were dead. But however attractive this view may be—and to Bruce it was particularly so, legalism in all its forms being "the enemy"—some wider reference is required. Dead works are more than good works gone bad. They are works in which there is a consciousness of sin, works which in themselves are definitely opposed to God, sinful, and therefore needing to be repented of and cleansed.

From such works the conscience is cleansed by the blood of Christ. Where the old sacrifices only effected a ceremonial cleansing, the blood of Christ reaches inwards and purifies the springs of life at their source in heart and conscience. Sin is purged. The obstacle is taken out of the way, and men are set free to serve (*latruein*) the living God.

To the same effect as the cleansing we have "Jesus suffered without the gate that He might *sanctify* the people with His own blood" (xiii. 12). To sanctify is to consecrate, to set them apart as a people of God, to dedicate them to a life of divine service. "That I should be, else sinning greatly, a dedicated spirit."

Also, "By one offering Jesus hath *perfected* for ever them that are sanctified" (x. 14)—perfected, that is, has brought and carried them to their true and desired end, to fellowship with God.

Cleansed, Sanctified, Perfected! We are tempted to

follow the example of Paul in the eighth of Romans and say, "Whom He cleansed them He also sanctified, and whom He sanctified, them He also perfected." But that would be misleading. Paul's phrases—called, justified, glorified—are new and different stages in a progressive experience. But in Hebrews there is no development. Each of the words stands for something that is accomplished once for all—complete in itself; and they all represent one and the same redemptive experience—as nearly as possible the Pauline "justified".

How does blood cleanse and sanctify? To that question no direct answer is given by Hebrews. There is no rationale of sacrifice beyond that which is given in the symbolism. "Without shedding of blood", it is said, "there is no remission", and it is simply taken for granted that the blood of Christ has this "mystical efficacy". "To him and to his readers the actual fact was so plain, so much a matter of experience, that the necessity of seeking for a principle did not suggest itself, and most likely no principle was present to his thoughts. . . . With the Old Testament sacrifices before him the author did not need to seek after a principle. Blood atoned. And the higher efficacy of Christ's blood just lay in its being the blood of Christ."[1]

All of which is true; but something more may be added. The cleansing is a moral cleansing, and it is not to be supposed that the blood of Christ acts simply of itself, mechanically. Bruce suggests that it acts "through the mind interpreting its significance and in proportion as it is thought upon". There is a further suggestion implicit in the symbolism and in the argument. "The

[1] Davidson, *Hebrews*, pp. 176, 178.

one really essential point in the whole ceremony of sacrifice," says Schultz, "is the confession of sin, whether that is done through an act or expressly in a solemn form of words." [1] Repentance is involved and faith also, as a response to the divine grace in the ordering of the sacrifice. And it is so here. "By the which will"—the holy, gracious will of God—"we are sanctified". Yet not apart from the consent and action of our own wills. Christ's death is for every man. He is our High Priest, our Representative before God. But only as we make His sacrifice our own, only as we yield our wills to the will of the Purifier in penitence and love, in trust and obedience, are we cleansed and redeemed. Only as we utter in whatever feebleness of faith a true "Amen" to the high "Amen" of Christ's in His sacrifice do we draw near to God. A true faith is the only fitting response to the grace of God in Christ's sacrifice of Himself.

That sacrifice, as we have seen, is interpreted in terms of will and life and spirit, in short of personality. And it is only in the personal realm that we can properly speak of forgiveness and atonement. When we come to forgiveness there are just "two and two only absolutely and luminously self-evident beings involved" —myself and my Redeemer, the Sanctifier and the sanctified. Ultimately it all goes back to God and to His gracious, reconciling will. He it is who atones, cleanses, sanctifies, perfects, pardons, forgives. Forgiveness comes to us from God through Christ; and through Christ we draw near to God in faith. We meet in Christ: in Him is our Peace. "Christ is the true Priest,

[1] *O.T. Theology*, 2: 100.

because He does not stand between us and God, but we meet God in Him" (Erskine of Linlathen). Beyond that we cannot go in the rationalising of forgiveness. It all proceeds from the infinite mercy of God, a miracle, first and last, of His supernatural grace.

IV

Before we consider the Ministry of the great High Priest there are two questions that must be disposed of.

1. Here is a writer who interprets the work of Christ in terms of priesthood and sacrifice. The question for us is, Was he justified in doing so? Has any substantial wrong been done to Jesus and the Gospel thereby? There are those who return an answer to the latter question in the affirmative. They point out that the writer makes no reference to the teaching of Jesus. They say that to interpret the work of Christ by means of the intricacies of the Levitical system is to complicate the Gospel needlessly. "The work of Christ as set forth in the epistle," says Professor Scott (p. 97), "is emptied in great measure of its real significance. . . . With all its impressiveness and its many profound suggestions the doctrine is lacking in vitality. We cannot but feel that the whole idea of priesthood is part and parcel of a bygone phase of religion. It has no true application to the work of Christ, and obscures not a few aspects of it which belong to its very essence." That is a hard saying. We must face the question.

To begin with we may notice that the writer himself is quite unconscious of doing any wrong. He is the one epistolary writer in the New Testament who owns to working from a picture of Jesus as He moved about

amongst men. He is well versed in the life of Jesus; knows more than he tells, and takes it for granted that his readers also know more. His references to actual events in that life may be few; but when he speaks of the faith, the sympathy, the temptations, the obedience, the fidelity, the godly fear, the sinlessness of Jesus, he has his eye immediately upon the object, not merely upon individual incidents of the life, but upon its whole course. These are observations, generalisations from the life. So that whatever we may think of the writer's teaching he himself believes that he is truly interpreting the mind of Christ, and drawing out the implications of the Gospel facts.

In this any fair reading of the Gospels seems to bear him out. As we see it the whole of our Lord's ministry was carried through under the sign of the Cross. There are hints of this in the earlier passages of the Gospels (Mark ii. 20, etc.), but naturally enough it only comes to the surface of the narratives towards the end, at Cæsarea Philippi and after, when Jesus speaks openly of His sufferings and death. "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark viii. 31). Surely that is the true Messianic secret and one long pondered by Jesus—not the mystery of His Person, His Christhood, for that had been guessed more or less accurately by friends and foes alike; but the mystery of His Passion, the thrice-repeated "Son of Man must suffer". Why that "must"? Whence that sense of destiny? It baffled the disciples, and it still baffles the historians. Schweitzer, in the midst of his eschatological frenzy,

sees the mind of Jesus visited at this point by the figure of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah.[1] But how extraordinary that Jesus should only begin to think of that priestly figure, and see His mission and His destiny reflected therein, within a fortnight of the end! Put that vision back at the beginning—where Jesus put it—at the Baptism and the Temptation, and how much becomes plain, how clear and straight His course. "Thou art my Son in whom I am well pleased"—the words from the Royal Psalm and the Song of the Servant—a Sonship, a Lordship to be realised through service and suffering and sacrifice, through faith and obedience! That is Hebrews in every jot and tittle. "So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a priest. Called of God, as was Aaron."

If it be said that these narratives are not historical, but a reading back of later Christian dogma into the early history, then we must hold that they are a correct reading, and that if we did not possess them we should require to invent them. The dogma came from Jesus, not from the Community. The dogma made the history, made the Community; but it was first of all the very music of Jesus' own soul. It is a strange delusion that a true history must be one that is free from all dogmatic interest—facts have a bias; and stranger still that Jesus never thought or spoke of His own Person and Mission. Jesus' "one thought was God, in that one thought He abode; for ever in that thought more deeply sinking". His whole life was divinely ordained—an obedience to a higher will. He was God's Son, here on His Father's business. There was a divine purpose to be effected through Him. He came not to

[1] *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 388.

call the righteous but sinners, to seek and to save that which was lost. His sympathies were with the ignorant and those who were out of the way. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. He considered the example of the prophets. Their sufferings were redemptive—could His be less? He came not to destroy, but to fulfil—to renew an old allegiance, to re-establish an old fellowship on the basis of a New Covenant; and at the last in the Supper He gave us its sign and its seal.

If Hebrews requires justification we must find it here. Priesthood cannot be made to cover the whole of Christ's life and work; but at least it takes us to the heart of it. We may have difficulties about it in our theology; but we all come to it in our worship—when we offer our sacrifice of praise and draw near to God in prayer ("through Jesus Christ our Lord"); when we observe the Lord's Supper ("the New Covenant in my blood"). There is nothing more in Hebrews than that. Forsyth does not put the matter too strongly when he says "New Testament Christianity is a priestly religion, or it is nothing".[1]

2. When did Jesus become a Priest? At His Baptism, or in Gethsemane, or on His Ascension to heaven? The point has been argued at great length and with infinite subtlety; but it does not really arise—at least for our author. As well might we ask When did He become the Son, or the Pioneer of our Salvation, or the Head of God's House, or the great Shepherd of the Sheep?

If we seek for an absolute beginning to the ministry we must look for it on high, to that moment when the words, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," were

[1] *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, p. 12.

uttered. That was its real beginning, the first movement towards the Son's offering of Himself. But that did not of itself constitute Him a priest. The Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one, but that oneness had first of all to be manifested in the flesh ere He could assume the garb of priest. It is not correct to speak of Jesus as the Eternal Priest. So far as earth and time are concerned we may say, if so we please, that the ministry began with the priestly consecration at the baptism in Jordan, and from that point onwards we may regard the life and work of Jesus as a priestly ministry. But that is very far from being our author's concern. He confines himself entirely to the death and ascended life of Christ. His interest is centred in the work of sacrifice and intercession. He displays no interest in the earthly beginnings of the ministry, his whole concern being to make it clear that it has no end, that it continueth ever. It neither begins nor ends in time. Jesus offered Himself to God "through Eternal Spirit", and the whole of His work as High Priest is regarded sub specie aeternitatis.

V

So we come to the Priestly Ministry proper—*the Heavenly Ministry*. It is natural that we should think of the ministry of Jesus upon earth as a priestly ministry. We can scarcely help doing so. His baptism at Jordan was a priestly consecration. His sympathy for the sick and the suffering, for the weak and the sinful, His bearing of their griefs and His forgiving of their sins, His intercessions for His friends and for the people, even His teaching, His declaration of the Father's name and the Father's will, can all be regarded as a priestly

service. And no doubt if we had the author of the epistle here before us in the flesh he would not disagree. But in the epistle the only priestly functions exercised by Jesus are those of sacrifice and intercession, and these in their entirety belong to the heavenly world. A priest did not function apart from his sanctuary, and until the blood had been presented in the sanctuary the sacrifice was not regarded as complete. "So Christ entered not into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (ix. 24, ix. 12). This, as Beyschlag says, is the centre of gravity in Christ's Priesthood.[1] The priestly activity in heaven is the making effectual of all that has gone before.

He appears! Just as no explanation is given of His coming to earth, so there is none of His exaltation to heaven. The Resurrection is taken up into the Ascension, and both are presupposed. The offering upon the Cross and the presentation of it in the heavenly sanctuary are regarded as one act. There could be no break between them, such as might be suggested by the mention of the Resurrection. All is one act, at once, in virtue of the one indissoluble life.

In contrast with the Johannine and other Apocalypses there is no Temple in heaven, and no Altar or Altar-service.[2] Heaven itself, where everything is "real", is the sanctuary. It is common form in Protestant and Roman theology to speak of the Cross and even of the Lord's Table as an Altar. But there is no room for that

[1] *N.T. Theology*, 2: 328. [2] cf. Rev. vii. 15, viii. 3.

in the symbolism of Hebrews. An altar, as such, belongs entirely to the sanctuary. The only site for a Christian altar would therefore be in heaven. But none is mentioned. The body of Christ was offered once for all upon the Cross, and the heavenly Priest has no need to repeat that offering in heaven. By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place; but the blood of Christ is never applied to any altar, only to hearts and consciences. Nor does He stand ministering at the altar, like Michael. "This man after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God" (x. 12), His work of atonement for ever ended, a finished work. When the author says, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (xiii. 10), he is not pluming himself and his friends on the possession of an altar. His reference to the altar is just his free manner of alluding to the sacrifice. We have an altar, a Sacrifice, of which, as in the case of the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, neither priest nor people have the right to eat. We have no Sacrificial Meal. Our Sacrifice was offered once for all, and it cannot be repeated or perpetuated in any meal or sacrament. The heart must be established by grace, not by meats.

Jesus enters heaven, the true sanctuary, in the power of His surrendered life. He "appears" in heaven "for us", on our behalf, as our Representative and also as our Forerunner. The Pioneer leads the way into the holiest. He has entered within the veil in advance, and there He waits expectantly till we come. There also He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

In the later theology of Judaism the greatest stress

is laid upon the intercession of angels and of saints and martyrs, and to the prayers and lives and deaths of the latter an atoning efficacy is ascribed (cf. pp. 108, 148). But no more than Paul will Hebrews hear of anything that seems to dim the glory of Jesus as the sole sacrifice, Mediator and Intercessor.

"When the Apostles mention this sacred function of intercession they do so," says Denney, "with a kind of adoring awe which is quite peculiar even in the New Testament. It seems to have impressed them as one of the unimaginable wonders of redemption—something which in love went far beyond all that we could ask or think. When inspired thought touches it, it rests on it as an unsurpassable height."[1] They touch it, but they do not dwell upon it or explain it. Hebrews leaves the symbolism to explain itself. There is something more in it than prayer; more even than a prevailing appeal made by the presence of Jesus before God, or by the continuance of His offering in heaven. The Father does not require to be perpetually reminded of His Son's work upon earth; still less does He require to be entreated to be merciful. "The intercession of the Ascended Christ," says Swete, "is not a prayer but a life. The New Testament does not represent Him as an *orante*, standing ever before the Father, and with outstretched arms, like the figures in the mosaics of the catacombs, and with strong crying and tears pleading our cause in the presence of a reluctant God; but as a throned Priest-King, asking what He will from a Father who always hears and answers His request. Our Lord's life in heaven is His prayer."[2]

[1] *Studies in Theology*, p. 162. [2] *The Ascended Christ*, p. 95.

A life, a continuous ministry of saving activity and help; the other side, the active and redemptive side of His sympathy! His interest in His brethren is not a thing of the past. He has a feeling for their infirmities. He offered Himself for them when on earth; now in heaven He devotes His life to them.

> "He Who for men their surety stood,
> And pour'd on earth His precious blood,
> Pursues in heav'n His mighty plan,
> The Saviour and the friend of man."

As High Priest He is over the House of God. He founded it, He redeemed it; its members are directly dependent upon Him; and as their Head He is immediately engaged on their behalf, with all the redemptive energies of heaven, all the "powers" of the world to come, at His disposal for their help and salvation.

On this point the best and fullest commentary is again to be found in the Fourth Gospel, in the discourses of the Supper Room and in the High Priestly prayer. Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end. For their sakes He consecrates Himself, offers Himself as a sacrifice to God and is glorified by God in doing so. He prays. He is no more in the world; and, as He prays, His whole concern is for the welfare of His brethren amid the difficulties and temptations of earth—that they may be kept from the evil, that they may be one. He prays, and comes to their help by His spirit. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Wherefore He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him." *A Priest for Ever!*

CHAPTER VIII

DEPARTING FROM THE LIVING GOD

RABBI DUNCAN said of Jonathan Edwards that "his doctrine was all application, and his application was all doctrine". We may say the same of Hebrews. He describes his work as a Word of Exhortation, and to read it as an exercise in speculative theology is to take it quite wrongly. Its doctrinal discussions only serve as a base for the practical; its hortatory parts, so far from being negligible parentheses, are the spear-points of the argument, and lead us directly to the author's purpose in writing. All that he has to say concerning Jesus as Lord of the World to Come, the Head of God's House, and its ever-living High Priest, is said with no other end in view than to waken his readers to a new interest in their faith and to a better understanding of it; to rouse and kindle them to fresh devotion, courage and constancy. They are depressed, and are in danger of drawing back from Christianity altogether. That is the writer's all-consuming dread: that is why he writes. It seems to him that his friends are living in deadly peril, living as it were on the edge of an abyss. Though the actual word—Apostasy—is only mentioned once (iii. 12), the dread reality of it is in view all through the epistle, and is felt like the long, rolling shudder of an earthquake to the very end. It is time to consider the signs and symptoms of it.

I

1. *Drifting* (ii. 1–4). The readers are asked to pay closer attention to the things which they have heard, lest they drift away and be lost. The "things heard" are further described as "the great salvation", and they are warned against neglecting or making light of it, as the people in the parable made light of the invitation to the wedding of the King's son (Matt. xxii. 5). The greatness of the salvation is seen in this: (*a*) It was proclaimed at the first by the Lord Himself; literally, it "received a beginning" from Him. Jesus had spoken of the coming of a kingdom, and had connected that kingdom and its blessings with His own person, sufferings, death and resurrection. That for Hebrews, as for Mark, was the "beginning" of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God (cf. Mark i. 1, Act i. 1);[1] the beginning also of the great salvation—a process to be completed at the Parousia and the reconstitution of all things. (*b*) It was brought and confirmed to these Christians by hearers of the Lord. To these "eye-witnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke i. 2) they owed the founding of their community. (*c*) It had come to them not in word only, but in demonstration of the spirit and with power—God distributing to them of His Spirit as it pleased Him, through signs and wonders and divers miraculous powers. The Kingdom had come nigh unto them. The World to Come had broken in. So great salvation!

The readers were losing interest in the Gospel, were becoming careless and indifferent as to the deeper

[1] But cf. Rawlinson, *Gospel according to Mark*, pp. 6, 250.

meaning of their faith. (Of this we shall hear more further on.) All unconsciously they were drifting to perdition. God had spoken to them in His Son. Through Him they had authentic tidings of invisible things. If the word that came through angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience met with punishment, how, asks the writer, shall we escape if we neglect the word and the great salvation which came to us through the Lord of angels? Penalty was inevitable.

2. *Hardening* (Ch. iii–iv). The ground has been fully covered in Chapter VI; but it is well to have the picture as a whole, and something may be added. The writer dwells with pleasure on their fine beginning as a community. God had manifested His presence in their midst in these strange new gifts and powers. His spirit filled the Church. The breath of spring was in the air. They were living in God's new day. New light was streaming in, and life with new powers was breaking through the dark mould. There was a glad fearlessness and a glorying in their hope and a fine confidence in their faith. What mattered the hatred and oppressions of this world, when they held God's other world in fee? That was in "the former days". But now the wonder and the freshness of the spring-time has passed. The early enthusiasm has spent itself. They are now in the second watch. A cooling and a hardening have set in, and the writer fears that they are losing their courage and confidence and hope. Unseen things are growing dim. Worldly prudence is getting the better of their other-worldly faith. Their hearts incline them to take the easy road and shirk new duties and responsibilities. They are being deceived by an evil heart of unbelief,

and though they know it not, they are steadily and surely departing from the living God, the God with whom they will have to do in judgment.

3. *Traditionalism* (v. 11–vi. 8). The writer has come to the heart of his subject—the Priesthood of Jesus, and he makes a pause. His subject is difficult enough in itself, but it is made more difficult by the condition of his readers. He fears that it will be hard to make it intelligible to them; for not only are they losing interest in the Gospel, but they have grown dull of hearing, have become torpid in their minds. By this time he feels that they ought to have been teachers; actually they require that someone—though he is not the man—should teach them over again the very first principles of the Christian faith. They are in need of milk, not solid food. They have not grown up and developed as they should, and are still babes when they should be men. They should have been "perfect", mature, in full possession of their powers; but—the fault is their own—they have not been exercising their faculties, and so are losing the power to distinguish between good and evil. Moral degeneracy follows intellectual apathy.

In passing it should be noted that this condemnation falls upon the whole community. The author is not addressing a special group of the more advanced and enlightened, the spiritual *élite*, amongst his friends, still less a group of teachers. Further, the various metaphors and phrases should be taken with some measure of freedom—*cum grano salis*, as Jülicher says of "ought to be teachers".[1] Otherwise the author's whole procedure is involved in contradiction. His doctrine of the priest-

[1] *Introduction to N.T.*, p. 167.

hood is not exactly milk for babes. Some deductions must be made. The phrases are amongst the commonplaces of Greek ethical thought, bringing out in piquant fashion the general backwardness and lack of progress.

The cause of this backwardness is fairly obvious. The readers' minds have become dull through dwelling so long amid elementary truths. They seem never to have advanced beyond the teaching of the catechumens' class. They were thinking that they had got to the bottom of Christianity, and had exhausted its possibilities. Thinking, were they? Not at all, replies the author, not thinking, only running round in the beaten track and fumbling with the fundamentals like children with the A B C. Their fault lay at the opposite extreme to that of Gerontius, "It is thy very energy of thought which keeps thee from thy God". Not for them "A Faith that Enquires", or "The Faith that Rebels". They had failed to advance in their faith to fuller knowledge, and such a faith is always in danger. "More often than we know," says Professor Scott (p. 44), "the failure of religion, as a moral power, is due to intellectual sloth. . . . The desire to understand more fully what has been given us in the Gospel is the safeguard, as it is also the surest index of a living obedience."

They have become dull of hearing, and it is the heart's desire of the writer that their dullness shall not become absolute (vi. 12). He feels sure that they are capable of better things, and so he proposes to take a bold course. He proposes to transfer them, as we might say, from the primary department to the Advanced Division. Let us pass on, he says, to what is mature,

leaving elementary Christian teaching behind. Something must be left behind if progress is to be made. No more, then, of relaying the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith towards God, of instruction as to washings and laying on of hands, or as to resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. Let us leave these to the catechumens. The foundation has been well and truly laid; let us get on with the building. There are reaches of truth you have never explored, and you have never fully grasped or understood the real greatness and glory of Christ, and the finality of the Christian salvation. You may find this difficult, and it will require some vigorous thinking. But never mind; that is the only way to get rid of dullness. "*Qui cessat esse melior cessat esse bonus.*"[1] Consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. Think of Him as a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek. This we will do, if God permit.

4. *Separatism*—Disaffection, Persecution (x. 24 f., xii. 4, xiii. 7–17). The exhortations of the epistle are addressed to all the members of the community. All alike were suffering from discouragement, and all alike were in danger—some more so than others. For some of them were definitely standing aloof from their brethren, and ceasing to take part with them in public worship (x. 25). The author does not say that they had renounced their faith; but their gatherings for worship were so much the rallying-point of the life and faith of the community that renunciation would almost inevitably follow their withdrawal from fellowship. "An early Christian who

[1] Moffatt, p. 73. "The motto which Cromwell is said to have written in his pocket bible."

attempted to live like a pious particle without the support of the community ran serious risks when there was no public opinion to support him. His isolation, whatever its motive—fear, fastidiousness, self-conceit, or anything else—exposed him to the danger of losing his faith altogether" (Moffatt).

No reasons are given for their withdrawal. But (*a*) there are hints of disaffection amongst themselves—"follow peace with all men"—and towards their leaders. The writer has to justify himself. He dwells upon the disinterestedness of the leaders' work, and calls for submission and obedience to them, so that they may give in their account with joy and not with grief. Evidently that work had not been all joy. If there had been no open rupture or insubordination there were at any rate some elements of strain and friction between them. And that, observes the writer, is far from profitable for you (xiii. 17 f.). (*b*) Zahn holds that they were forsaking their own gathering in discontent, in order selfishly to connect themselves with another congregation where they found more satisfaction and greater edification.[1] But this is too subtly imagined. There is nothing particularly deadly in such a "forsaking", in lifting one's "lines" as the Scotch say; and the desire for edification was the very thing which they lacked. Besides—not edified under Hebrews! (*c*) Our best hint is found in the verb, and not in the pronoun (ourselves) as with Zahn, for that is not emphatic. "Forsaking" carries the suggestion of deserting in the face of the enemy, "leaving the assembly exposed to peril in the conflict" (Westcott).

[1] *Introduction to N.T.*, 2: 348.

Its force is aptly brought out by Moffatt, "Do not do to one another what God never does to you (xiii. 5); do not leave your fellow-members in the lurch". The danger to which they were exposed was real. They were being tempted through sufferings, and no one was able to thank God, like Browning, he found it hard to be a Christian. In the early days their leaders had suffered martyrdom. After their conversion they themselves had passed through a great conflict of suffering, partly through being held up to public obloquy, and partly through making common cause with those who were so used. And now they were face to face with a new trial. So far the present members of the community have not had to face the worst; "ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin" (xii. 4). "It is a reproach; not unkindly put," says Monsignor Barnes, "they ought perhaps to have resisted unto blood."[1] But Ignatius had not yet appeared, and the writer is far from blaming them: he has nothing but praise for their bearing in the past; he is not reproaching them, but preparing them for a new and imminent peril. "Not yet" had they resisted unto blood, but any day they might be called upon to do so and make the supreme sacrifice; any day they might be called to go forth to Jesus in the unseen world by way of martyrdom. There may not have been any organised system of persecution by the State; but under Domitian the pressure against Christians was severe, and they were always subject to outbursts of popular fury. Any day the storm might break. The danger was real, and apparently some of them looked like yielding to the

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1931.

temptation to evade the danger and make themselves safe. In such circumstances withdrawal from fellowship with their brethren was tantamount to betrayal.

Clearly the present was no time for standing apart from one another in selfish isolation. They must close their ranks and rally to each other's help. They must consider one another, must take account of each other's circumstances and difficulties; must stimulate one another to love and good works. Above all, to keep their hearts from fainting let them consider Him who endured the Cross and its shame. In calling them to suffer God was not punishing them but honouring them, as He honoured and glorified His Son. Suffering is the divine seal to sonship. Its end is righteousness and peace. Up with your listless hands, then; make straight paths for your feet, and see that the lame are made whole, and not left as permanent cripples. You have a birthright in heaven. Let no thought of personal safety or worldly advantage rob you of that eternal inheritance (xii. 3–17).

5. *Materialism* (xiii. 9 f.). These brethren were thinking that they had exhausted the possibilities of the Christian faith, and were being attracted by a variety of novel teachings connected in some way with the partaking of food. "Be not carried away by a variety of novel doctrines; for the right thing is to have the heart strengthened by grace, not by the eating of 'meats' —that has never been of any use to those who have had recourse to it." The reference seems to be to participation in sacrificial meals of some kind. Ascetic abstinence from meat is excluded. The regulations as to the

sacrificial meals of Judaism (the old Peace-offerings) could scarcely be described as "various" or "novel"; these Christians knew their Bibles. With the centralisation of worship in Jerusalem, and the increase of the Diaspora such meals had fallen into the background and had little attraction for dwellers outside Palestine.[1] This, on the supposition that the Temple was still in being; by A.D. 85 Temple and Feasts were things of the past. The alternative, therefore, is to think of the sacrificial meals of the pagan cults. The attraction of the "Mysteries" was strong. They had their common meals, in which partakers were supposed to have fellowship with the presiding deity, and thereby to become possessors of salvation and immortality. Ill-instructed Christians might easily be tempted to join in such feasts. Against the practice of participating in both Christian and pagan meals Paul had to protest in the strongest possible terms. Partakers of the sacrifices were partakers of the altar, and partakers of the altar were partakers of the demons (1 Cor. x.). Hebrews makes a similar protest in his own way, and on the lines of his familiar analogy.[2] "We have" (in contradistinction to the heathen) "an altar, a sacrifice, of which the worshippers have no right to eat". Under the Old Covenant no priest or worshipper ever partook of the sacrifices offered on the great Atonement Day. The bodies were burned outside the camp. There were no partakers of the altar then, nor are there any partakers now. Jesus suffered outside

[1] cf. A. C. Welch, *Post-Exilic Judaism*, p. 288.

[2] This is sufficient, of itself, to dispose of the theory that in Chapter XIII we have a fly-leaf from a lost Pauline epistle. Paul never glances at the ritual of the Day of Atonement, just as he never, of himself, refers to the blood of the covenant (xiii. 20). "Leaders" (xiii. 7, 17) is another non-Pauline term.

the gate in order to sanctify the people by His own blood. We have one great final sacrifice for sins; but we have no sacrificial meal. Our sacrament is not a sacrifice. The heart is established not by meats but by grace, by God's free gift in Christ, and we are partakers of Christ by faith.

In view of these conditions—loss of interest and of confidence, lack of progress, coldness, unbelief, discouragement and disaffection within the community; the threat of persecution and the attraction of the Mysteries without—we can understand our author's deep anxiety. A final lapse from Christianity was only too possible. The main root of the trouble lay in their imperfect understanding of the nature of Christianity. Their faith had not ripened and come to maturity. They were troubled by the sufferings and death of Jesus, and had not seen how in these sufferings Jesus was crowned with glory and honour and through them attained His Lordship over the world. And why should they have recourse to pagan altars when in Christianity they had all that the Mysteries had to offer and so much more—no mythical divinity requiring to be "saved" afresh each year, but an ever living, ever active Lord and High Priest, a sacrifice that needed not to be repeated, access to the Holiest for all, a true worship, a living fellowship, a final revelation, an eternal salvation? As for what man could do to them, what need had they to fear? Had not God said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee? A true faith—faith like that of the patriarchs, and prophets and martyrs, a faith like that of Jesus—would make them more than conquerors. In

it they had the assurance of things hoped for, the certainty of things not seen. Their inheritance was in heaven. Why then should they draw back to the losing of their souls? Let them not be misled by an evil heart of unbelief.

II

Apostasy is described as a departing from the living God (iii. 12), a falling away (vi. 6), a drawing back (x. 39); and the question arises very naturally—To what were they withdrawing? The usual answer is that what the writer fears is a reversion to their old ancestral faith—to Judaism or Paganism. This looks natural enough, but it needs examination.

1. If the writer had any fear as to Judaism he never betrays it either by word or look. He has no word of warning against Judaism, or against participation in its worship. He never refers to the Temple and its cultus as these existed in Christian times. His sole preoccupation is with the ritual of the law-books and the tabernacle of the wilderness. And just as there is no warning against the ritualism of the Temple, so there is none against the legalism of the Synagogue. On the supposition of a reversion to Judaism this is more than strange. For it was in the synagogue and not in the Temple that the vital interests of Judaism were centred, and that its heart and strength were to be found. No doubt the Jews of the dispersion paid their Temple dues; but for most of them that was their sole connection with the religion of the cultus. Most of them had never seen the Temple, or a priest, or a sacrifice. Their real religious life was bound up with the services of the synagogue and the teaching of the law. So that when

the Temple fell, though their pride and patriotic feelings were touched, their religious life and faith were unaffected. The Judaism of the synagogue was the only Judaism that Christians had to fear, and quite definitely it was for them the enemy. Yet of this there is never a word in the epistle. It is said that the controversy as to the Law had died down within the Church. No doubt it had; but it was bound to recur and become acute wherever and whenever there was a question of Christians turning or returning to Judaism. Adhesion to the whole law, with its sign of circumcision, was a vital matter that neither Jew nor Christian could pass by. On this point Hebrews is entirely silent.

There is one passage that is frequently alluded to in support of a reversion to their old faith. "Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (xiii. 13). Here, the "camp" is taken as referring to Judaism, and the verse is read as an appeal for a break with that faith and all its ways. This may be questioned. On this reading the writer and his friends were still within the Jewish Camp, and had not abandoned religious fellowship with Israel. (There could, therefore, be no question of a "return" to Judaism.) In point of fact they had a footing in two camps, the Jewish and the Christian; and we may well ask how this was possible. In the early days of the faith in Jerusalem we know that this was the rule. There was no break with Judaism at the first. But as the true nature of Christianity was realised, and as Christianity went out into the world as a religion for

every man, that double footing could not long be maintained. A break was inevitable; and in the larger mission field, as can be seen from the Acts of the Apostles, the breach with the synagogue was never long delayed. That any body of Christians outside Palestine, confessing Jesus as Lord, should be in vital relationship with the synagogue after so many years of Christian training is not quite credible. How could an enlightened Christian like the writer, holding the views he did as to the provisional, shadowy nature of Jewish ordinances, and as to the person of Christ, the true Messiah and divine Son of God—views that were anathema to orthodox Jews—be within the Jewish Camp? And how could Roman Christians with any decency of spirit maintain or desire to maintain vital relations with the synagogue after the Neronic massacres so carefully fomented by Jews? Even though they had desired to do so would they have been permitted? Would they have been allowed within the Ghetto even? Jewish hatred and opposition must be reckoned with as a factor in the case. Zahn holds that Christians in Rome had been cut off from fellowship with the synagogue from the time of the edict of Claudius (A.D. 50), and that is likely to have been the case (Acts xviii. 2).[1] At any rate after A.D. 64–65, if not before that date, the Jewish camp would be closed and barred to them.

We have to come back to a truer and older interpretation of the passage, to the interpretation of the Greek Fathers, who took the "camp" to mean this world. The verse is a clarion call for separation from the world, for unworldliness or other-worldliness of life. They

[1] *Introduction to N.T.*, 1: 427, 2: 359.

are to go forth to Jesus *without the camp*[1] that is to Jesus in the heavenly world, the heavenly tabernacle. The going forth is to be taken figuratively, but something more radical is involved in it than a breach with Judaism. There is no going to Jesus unless and until we have done with this world and its ways. They are to go forth like Abraham, confessing that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They are to go forth *bearing His reproach*, as Moses did, when he made choice of the invisible in preference to the pleasures and rewards of this world (xi. 26). For here, adds the writer, here in the camp, here in this world we have no continuing city, but we seek one which is to come.

2. What of a return to Paganism? That would be natural enough on the understanding that these dissatisfied Christians were Gentiles. They had turned from idols to serve the living God and to wait for His Son from heaven; now they were departing from the living God once again to serve idols, and that for Hebrews would be simple godlessness. All the same, apart from the reference to the motley assortment of teachings, there are no warnings against Paganism any more than against Judaism; though the terms in which the writer speaks of punishment are those which in the Old Testament are applied to idolaters.

III

To what, then? On that point the writer has just one word—they were drawing back *unto Perdition*

[1] "Without the Camp"—the usual phrase for the place of shame, burning, execution. Jesus, however, is no longer in the place of shame, and the reference may be to the old Elohist narrative in Exodus xxxiii. 7, where "without the camp" is given as the site of the Tabernacle, the place of heavenly glory.

(x. 39). In renouncing Christianity they were departing from the *living God*, the source of all life and salvation (iii. 12). They were crucifying in their own persons *the Son of God* and putting Him to an open shame (vi. 6); trampling Him under foot and counting His covenant blood by which they were sanctified an unholy thing (x. 29). Finally they were wantonly insulting the *Spirit of Grace*, the spirit whose nature and whose gifts were so gracious (x. 29). What did Judaism or Paganism matter when they were giving themselves to utter godlessness? From such a departure there would be no possibility of a return. Their fall would be absolute, without hope of recovery. For in the case of those who have been enlightened once for all, have tasted the heavenly gift, have participated in the Holy Ghost, have tasted the word of God in its goodness and the powers of the world to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. Think of that profane person, Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. You know that though he sought the blessing with tears he was rejected; he found no opportunity to repent (xii. 17). For if we wilfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins left. Jesus has died and has died in vain. No more sacrifice, no more repentance, no more hope; nothing remains but an awful outlook of doom, that "burning Wrath" which will consume the foes of God. (Wrath, "principle of retribution inherent in a moral universe", Dodd, *Romans*, p. 204.) We know who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will exact a requital": and again, "the Lord will pass sentence on his people". It is an awful

thing to fall into the hands of the living God (x. 26f.). Unto Perdition!

The writer had read in his Gospel of an "eternal sin", for which there was no forgiveness (Mark iii. 29); and that was how he regarded the sin of apostasy. There could be no second repentance for those who so wantonly flouted the Saviour. "It is impossible"—that stern verdict sounds like a death-knell throughout the epistle. Its rigour has vexed the Church in many ages.[1] But the point we have to notice is that Hebrews is not dealing with the possibility of repentance for sins in general, or with the restoration of the lapsed, but with wilful persistence in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth. It is in such a case that he denies the possibility of repentance. His judgment is based on intuition and observation. He has seen the cooling of the heart and the hardening into contempt and unbelief; he has seen the drawing back, and to what else could it be but to perdition, to utter loss, and exclusion from final bliss? He regards the matter from the human side, for in his view the divine, the renewing Spirit has no material on which to operate, and no opportunity for doing so. "If we are to think ethically of human destiny," says Professor Taylor once more, "we must be prepared to face the possibility that there may be those who obstinately shut the windows of the soul against all influences from the divine, until they have made themselves impervious to them. A man may conceivably so harden himself against good that he ends by

[1] Early in the second century we find the Roman Church seeking relief from its rigour; cf. The Shepherd of Hermas (Mand. 4: 3, Vis. 2: 2) who admits the possibility of a second repentance for Christians, but no more, and only up to a certain date.

becoming incapable of it, or by sheer protracted sloth he may lose the power to make the surrender by which we die into true personality. At least we have, as moralists, no right to say that such a thing is intrinsically inconceivable."[1]

It is impossible! And yet:

"I stood at Naples once, a night so dark
I could have scarce conjectured there was earth
Anywhere, a sky or sea or world at all:
But the night's black was burst through by a blaze—
Thunder struck blow on blow, earth groaned and bore,
Through her whole length of mountain visible:
There lay the city thick and plain with spires,
And, like a ghost disshrouded, white the sea.
So may the truth be flashed out by one blow,
And Guido see, one instant, and be saved.
Else I avert my face, nor follow him
Into that sad obscure sequestered state
Where God unmakes but to remake the soul
He else made first in vain; *which must not be.*"[2]

IV

The writer's judgment is a stern one; but the situation was too serious to be treated lightly. His friends were in danger, and the very thought of apostasy fills his soul with terror. That long shudder of his is his strongest argument. His very love for them makes him stern, and not afraid to wound. He must let them see that sin in all its naked horror, must stab their spirit broad awake. They are living in a moral world, and the end of sin is perdition. Our God is gracious; but our God is a consuming fire, and only to be served with reverence and godly fear. The last thing they dare do

[1] *The Faith of a Moralist.* 1: 324. [2] *The Ring and the Book,* X: 2119.

is to presume upon His mercy. They dare not play fast and loose with God.

The moral facts make him stern; but they also make him hopeful. As he thinks of his friends and remembers their record, the cloud begins to lift from his brow. Somehow he cannot believe it possible that they should go back upon God and Christ. Somehow he is persuaded better things of them than that. In spite of all his fears and all that he has said, he is sure that they will take the better course that leads unto salvation. This is a moral world, and God does not play fast and loose with men. God is just: He is not unfair: He will not forget what they have done, or the love they have shown for His sake in ministering as they still do to the saints. After all, theirs is a field which the Lord hath blest, and far from being reprobate. That ministry of theirs to the saints—its labour and its love—is a plant of heavenly growth, and God will care for it (vi. 10). He recalls the former days (not the earliest days of the community), when after their enlightenment they endured so hard a conflict of sufferings, and all so bravely, uncomplainingly, even joyously. That courage and confidence of theirs is another plant with its roots in heaven, and God will see that it does not fail of its proper fruit and reward (x. 35).

God is faithful, and they must be faithful too. His heart's desire is that each one of them will show the same keenness in their Christian hope as in their brotherly love, that they will keep it up in full assurance to the very end. God is not slack concerning His promises; and they must not be slack, but imitators of those who through faith and patience have inherited the promises.

They must not spoil that fine record of theirs, they must not give up their confidence. Patient endurance is what is called for. They have not long to wait for their reward; for in a little, a very little while, the Coming One will come and will not tarry. "The storm burst on them early; they weathered it nobly; why give up the voyage when it is nearly done?" Meanwhile, God's just man will live by his faithfulness. If he shrink back God can have no pleasure in him. "Acts may be forgiven; not even God can forgive the hanger-back." But we are not the men for that, thank God; not the men to slink back unto perdition, but to move forward in faith unto salvation. Now faith is . . . By faith . . .

CHAPTER IX

SEEING HIM WHO IS INVISIBLE

HERE we are directly engaged with the World to Come —the world of eternal reality, the world of the supernatural, the world of spirits, the heavenly world—transcendent, yet immanent, brooding over this earth in hope and renewing the life of men by its "powers" and "gifts"—the world where God has His throne, where the great High Priest continually ministers and where dwell the spirits of just men made perfect—our better Country, the City which hath foundations, the Rest that remaineth for the people of God. The power by which this world is discerned and apprehended is Faith.

> "O world invisible, we view thee,
> O world intangible, we touch thee,
> O world unknowable, we know thee,
> Inapprehensible, we clutch thee."

I

"Now faith is the *substance* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen" (xi. 1). In this description or definition we are at once confronted with the problem of the differing translations. One is loth to part with the familiar phrases of the Authorised Version, preserving as they do something of the semi-philosophical, semi-pictorial quality of the original. Yet "substance" and "evidence" are misleading terms. They require

explanation, and are apt to be taken too literally, or too philosophically. Still more misleading is the marginal reading of the Revised Version, "the giving substance to"; for no amount of faith can add to the reality of things hoped for. These exist in their own right, and quite independently of our faith.[1]

Faith is not something that stands under the soul, supporting it and making it sure of things hoped for; it is the assurance itself: it is not something that "proves" or "tests" the reality of things unseen, and leads to conviction, but the conviction itself. It is the soul's immediate certainty of the future and the unseen, not the facts or processes which give rise to that certainty.

A similar consideration rules out the interesting suggestion from the Papyri of "Title-deeds" instead of "Substance". A title invests us with proprietary rights. Faith, however, is not the conferring of a right or title to things hoped for, but the sense of possession itself, the warm and intimate assurance that already the inheritance is ours.

Faith, then, is this grand assurance and certainty, as to the reality of the unseen World. It means "that we

[1] "I see no reason to believe," writes Rashdall, "that ὑπόστασις ever actually *means* a subjective state of mind, though doubtless the assertion that faith *is* the reality can only be true in the sense that a strong conviction is equivalent to the reality". The admission is notable. It is impossible to define faith (a subjective state) in terms of objective reality. "Realisation," which Rashdall prefers, is ambiguous; for on this earth the only possible realisation is that of a strong assurance or conviction. (*The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, p. 162.) Nothing more is involved in Chrysostom's note—"For whereas things that are matters of hope seem to be unsubstantial, Faith gives them substance; or rather does not give it, but is itself their being. For instance, the resurrection has not taken place, and is not in substance, but Faith gives it reality (ὑφίστησιν) *in our soul*." (Quoted by Inge, *Faith and its Psychology*, p. 16.)

are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see" (Moffatt). Moving about in our world of shadows faith has the feeling for reality, for the "true" and the eternal—"reality-feeling", to use a term of the philosophers. In the swiftness and sureness of its apprehension it can only be likened to divination, or intuition, or instinct, or genius. It is "seeing Him who is invisible" (xi. 27).

If we seek for the source or ground of this assurance we can only find it in the nature of the soul. It is the gift of God. "In its true nature faith can be justified by nothing but itself," says T. H. Green.[1] It is its own best evidence; its witness is within. For in the soul we have a projection of the higher world, a headland of eternity running out into the sea of time, "the Beyond that is within". Deep calls to deep: the heavenly world sends out its calls, its powers; the soul responds and faith is born. "The push of a divine life within answers to the pull of a divine life without."[2]

How is Faith related to Hope? In the epistle we have half a dozen references in all to Hope,[3] and at first sight there does not appear to be much difference between it and faith. We are said to draw near to God by hope (vii. 19), just as we are said to draw near by faith (x. 22). The confession of our Hope (x. 23) might quite well be described as the confession of our Faith, as indeed it is in the inferior reading of the Authorised Version. One can scarcely distinguish between "full assurance of hope" (vi. 11), and "full assurance of faith" (x. 22). And yet there is a difference. Faith has the wider out-

[1] *Faith*, p. 74. [2] E. Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 132.
[3] Ch. iii. 6; vi. 11, 18; vii. 19; x. 23; xi. 1.

look. Hope looks to the future only, whereas Faith has dealings in the present as well as with the future. But the difference goes deeper, and is best expressed by saying that Faith is just Hope plus the conviction, the inward vision and assurance, that inspires and justifies the Hope. The "plus" is vital. For Faith and Hope are two sisters "never to be sunder'd without tears". Separated from Faith, Hope soon begins to wilt. Hope deferred, hoping against hope,

> "to hope till hope creates
> From its own wreck the things it contemplates,"

is a desperate business, fitly symbolised by the lonely, blinded, listening figure of Watts' famous picture. But Faith with its immediate certainty of the Unseen brings the things hoped for very near, adds distinctness to them, and soon restores the flush of health to Hope, soon brings back its confidence and rejoicing.

Principal D. S. Cairns has suggested that Hope's true symbol is the Winged Victory of Samothrace in the Louvre. "The Greeks called her Victory, but shattered and headless as she is, she is, to my mind, a splendid symbol of Christian Hope, as she stands there on the prow of the rushing galley. Its speed is not enough for her. Her great white wings are spread above her, every fibre instinct with energy, and she is in the act to fleet away across the blue waters to bring to some waiting city by the Aegean Sea the news of Marathon or Salamis. That is how the New Testament Hope strains forward."[1] Yes! but it is Faith that gives her the wings and the victory. "Now faith is the assurance of *things hoped for*."

[1] *The Reasonableness of the Christian Faith*, p. 123.

On the whole Hope has a more passive rôle in Hebrews than the active and adventurous Faith. Christianity is described as the religion of "the better Hope" (vii. 19), and that hope is set before us objectively, as is the Race and the Joy in xii. 1–2. Our hopings and desirings may veer about, inconstant as the wind; but the great hope of the World to Come on which the Christian heart is set is sure and steadfast, for it rests upon the promises and the unchanging faithfulness of God. It is like an anchor cast into the mysterious deep of the invisible world, and the anchor holds. Here, we are as refugees running before the storm, "with emptied arms and treasures lost". But amid the surge of sense and time we have this hope to steady us, this anchor of the soul to which we can cling; and we do so, we lay hold of it by faith (vi. 18–20).

II

Assurance! Conviction! And primarily as to God. Faith is "being very sure of God." Such faith the writer says is "fundamental" (vi. 1); but so far as his friends are concerned he does not propose to relay the foundation. In the eleventh chapter he is not teaching again the rudiments of his subject, but challenging his friends and readers to a braver exercise of the faith which they already possess, persuading them to carry it to full assurance.

He opens his Bible and reads, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". There, he comments, you have the true voice of Faith. "Through faith we understand," we perceive with the mind—faith there plants eyes—"that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not

made of things which do appear" (literally "of the phenomenal" xi. 3). For the ultimate explanation of the universe we have to look beyond appearances: its cause and origin are only to be found in the creative word of God. The world is God's world, directly dependent upon Him in all its parts.

> "The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—
> Are not these, O soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?"

That is our understanding of the matter; and it is arrived at not by way of argument or proof, but by faith, by the intuition and vision of faith.

"Through faith we understand." There should never be any conflict between faith and reason. Faith is rational. Faith is reason's more daring and keener-sighted colleague; it is that deeper element in reason, that intuition, that vision without which reason is unable to get to work. Nay, not so much an element in reason, not so much a colleague, as reason itself at its purest and bravest. "Reason is faith cultivating itself." "Through faith we understand." It takes us to the very heart of things, and gives us a sure insight into reality. It is the secret of all great character; and of all great literature and science and art as well. "Ay, but you know, until a man can write that 'Enter God', he has made no Art. None!"[1]

And no Religion! According to Hebrews religion is Worship, a drawing near to God in heart and life; and it is interesting to notice that though the writer takes his examples of faith in the order of history,

[1] R.L.S. to Henley. *Letters*, 1: 274.

the earliest instances are those of the worshipful life—the sacrifice of Abel and Enoch's walk with God. Of the latter he says: "But without faith it is impossible to please (or satisfy) God. For he that cometh to God—draws near to God in worship—must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (xi. 6). Worship on any other terms than those of faith, worship without God, as some ultra-moderns will have it, is the emptiest of forms. An element of belief as well as trust is involved. A worshipper must have a "belief", a creed. *He must believe;* and not merely in the bare existence of God, but in His moral activity as well. God must be clothed with other attributes than those of awe and majesty. That we may draw near to God and walk with Him in fellowship as Enoch walked, God must be known not only as the great "I am", but as "I will be that I will be"; known and trusted as the Rewarder of all who diligently seek Him, the Hearer of their prayers, the Giver of the promises and their fulfiller, the Providence and Moral Governor of the World. Faith is what satisfies God, and God is He who satisfies faith.

Creator! Ruler! Rewarder! The Living God, who is ever doing wonders! But power and justice in God are not enough for faith. It cannot work with an impoverished idea of God, and its heart is never satisfied until it comes in sight of God's forgiving grace. That is never far away in Hebrews. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." "Grace Reigns!" and of this we have the assurance through the great High Priest, who has passed through

the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. We are believers in God, we come unto God "through Him" (vii. 25), for in Him "all the Father shines substantially expressed".

Where such assurance of God holds sway there can be no room for doubt or fear. We can draw near with a true heart, in absolute assurance of faith; with glad fearlessness, too, and glorying in our hope (x. 22, iii. 6). Faith is the banishing of fear, of all sorts of fear—fear of man and fear of God, fear of the unseen and the unknown, of the present and the future, of life and death. No more in their approach to God need men say, "I exceedingly fear and quake". That old, irrational fear of the Numinous is finally overcome in Christ (xii. 21). No more need they fear the spite of men, or be afraid of poverty or loss or persecution, for He has said, "Never will I fail you, never will I forsake you" (xiii. 5).

"*He has said!*" Faith in God is trust in God's word, obedience to God's word. He speaks from heaven (xii. 25), and His words are to be numbered amongst the "powers" of the World to Come. They are parts of Himself, and partake of His livingness. They are quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (iv. 12). But there is more than "sharpness" in God's livingness; there is grace, and His words are full of grace. Such are the Promises, those rich words and far-reaching purposes of grace, which neither the unbelief nor the sin of men can finally frustrate. Hebrews makes much of them, but for him the promises made to men in the old time are now gathered up into one in Christ. Believers of the Old Covenant obtained

" promises ", but they received not the Promise (x. 36, xi. 39). That is " the better thing " reserved for the men of Christ's day. The preaching of it—the Gospel—can only be received by faith ; the " goodness " of God's word can only be " tasted " in the experience of faith. There is only one right thing to do with God's word when it comes to a man, and that is to receive it, to believe it, to obey it. " By faith, Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed." How the call, the word " Get thee out ", came to him, whether through the movements of his time, the growing restlessness of his heart, the longing for a fuller life and destiny, or in some fashion more direct, does not matter. Abraham knew God's voice when he heard it, knew that God had spoken and had given him His promise.

> " Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest
> Cannot confound nor doubt Him nor deny :
> Yea with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
> Stand thou on that side, for on this am I."

Abraham obeyed, venturing his all upon that word of God. On the other hand, " the word preached " to the men of the Exodus (literally " the word of hearing ") did not profit them, because it was not met by faith in them that heard it (iv. 2). So they entered not into God's rest because of unbelief. What Hebrews most dreads is a wicked, unbelieving heart, for that leads directly to apostasy, to departing from the living God. To come to God, that is faith : to depart from God, that is unbelief. And what predisposes the heart to unbelief more than anything else is just mental sloth and indifference, letting things slip, being " dull of hearing ", or

"hearing with half an ear" (v. 11, ii. 2). "Let us hear the word of God", that is let us receive it, believe it, obey it, and not merely listen to it!

III

So far all the examples have been taken from the Old Testament, and that is as it should be. The House of God, the People of God are one through all the ages, and there would be something seriously wrong if believers under the New Covenant were to act on different principles or from different motives from those of the Old. The saints do not contradict themselves. From the psychological point of view faith must be the same under both covenants, compounded of the same vital elements, of trust and hope and vision and obedience and courage and endurance.

What advantage then has the New? Much every way. The writer's contention is that the religion of the New Covenant is continuous with that of the Old, and that in the New the Old is perfected and crowned. Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfil. And so it is with Faith. In Christianity faith comes into its own, comes to full assurance: Jesus is the Perfecter of Faith.

"Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (xii. 1–2).

Jesus is the supreme exemplar of the faith that the

writer has been describing in the eleventh chapter. His readers have had great examples in the past. They are encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses, who are thought of not so much as spectators cheering them on, but as record-holders in the same great race, each of them a witness in new and vital fashion to the powers and possibilities of faith. Further, they have an Honour's List of their own, of men from their own circle who have graduated through martyrdom. "Remember your leaders, the men who spoke the word of God to you; look back upon the close of their career and copy their faith" (xiii. 7).

Above all they have Jesus, and they must run their race "looking unto" Him. He was the supreme believer, and faith meant the same thing for Him as for them, the same vital assurance of the Unseen. The heavenly world was very near and very real to Jesus. He lived His life there far more than in Galilee. His life of prayer, His unshadowed communion with the Father the flowering and fruition of His faith. His mighty works were wrought by faith. He made faith possible for others, and always the faith that healed was the assurance that God's saving power was present in Him for the relief of every human need. In faith He sowed the seed, His Word, Himself. He lived His life by faith, and in faith He yielded it back to God.

But Jesus was far more than the supreme example of faith. He was its discoverer, as it had never been discovered before—*the Pioneer of Faith*, as well as the Pioneer of our Salvation. The religion of the Old Testament was a religion of faith. Its saints were "believers", the people of faith. But strangely enough

they lacked the word. "Faith" is not an Old Testament word. It belongs to the New Testament, and it was Jesus who made it current coin. "Have faith in God", He says. "Nothing is more certain than this, that in His teaching about faith in God and in His practice of it, Jesus was absolutely unique among all the great leaders of religion that history has known. . . . In the midst of them stands this figure with His unique and immovable confidence in the Father, His faith that God is always nearer, mightier, more loving and more free to help every one of us than any one of us ever realises, and that therefore our supreme duty is faith in Him and the staking of everything upon Him and His purpose of good for mankind."[1] That is the "faith" of Hebrews and of Paul and of the other New Testament writers; and they learned it in the first instance from Jesus—the Pioneer. In the great enterprise of Christian faith Jesus is Leader, Explorer, Captain of the Lord's Host; and according to Hebrews all the faithful, past, present and to come, follow in His train, bear His reproach and share in His reward. From this point of view faith resolves itself into a following of Jesus, as in the Gospels, taking the road with Him to the city of God.

Pattern, Pioneer and *Perfecter of Faith!* Jesus carried it through to the end. In the Cross when confronted with the sin of men and the darkness of death, faith had its perfect work. Jesus came to do God's will in sacrifice (x. 7), and His obedience, His faith, was perfected in death. He was God's Son, and on God's service. Even in death He would be in God's care, and God would bring Him again from the dead. So

[1] D. S. Cairns, *The Faith that Rebels*, p. 212.

for the joy that was set before Him He endured (as seeing Him who is invisible) the Cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God. The Pioneer of Faith and the Pioneer of our Salvation meet at the Cross, and both are there made perfect.

This emphasis upon the faith of Jesus is a new and welcome note, and Hebrews stands alone in the New Testament in describing Jesus as the great protagonist of faith. It would be strange, however, strange almost to the point of incredibility, if that were all; if all that a New Testament writer had to say was, "Whose faith follow", and there were no hint of any closer or more dependent relationship to Jesus than that. It is well to remember that in Hebrews we have not the whole of the writer's mind upon Christianity, and that for the special purpose which he had in view—the confirming of wavering faith—nothing could have been more helpful and stimulating than the picture of Jesus as a believer, as the subject of faith. Even so, traces of another relationship in which Jesus is the object of faith can be found throughout the whole epistle.

Jesus is described as "the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (v. 9), and in Hebrews obedience is just another term for faith—faith of which Jesus is the object. He is the Pioneer of our Salvation, and there is no following a leader without some element of confidence or personal trust in him as leader. We take the road with Jesus, we follow in His train because of our faith in Him. The writer speaks of "Our Confession" (iii. 1, iv. 14) and of "the Confession of our Hope" (x. 23). Whether these references imply that there was at that time "a fixed body of doctrine and

practice on which all members of the church were agreed" may be doubted. But at any rate there was involved in them the recognition of Jesus as Lord or as Son of God, and the confession of faith in Him as such at baptism (cf. Rom. x. 9, Acts viii. 37). Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant, and all its "good things" come through Him and surely not apart from faith in Him. The consciences of the readers have been cleansed from dead works; they have been "enlightened" and "sanctified"; they have received the knowledge of the truth, have tasted the heavenly gift, the good word of God and the powers of the World to Come. Further, they are described as Partakers of a heavenly calling, of the Holy Spirit and of Christ. All this testifies to the depth and reality of their Christian experience; and here experience and faith are one. For what can "receiving", "tasting", "partaking" be but synonyms for "believing"?

This is seen most clearly in the phrase "Partakers of Christ" (iii. 14). In the context Christ is Head over God's House, and it is a strange household in which the members have no personal relations or dealings with its head. He it is who assigns to us our place and our tasks in the household; for there we are only members and servants, dependent on Him for our every breath, for help and guidance and sympathy and encouragement. It is in the everyday life and work of the household that we come to know how great our need of Christ is and how gracious the Lord is; there, too, in its fellowship and communion, that we learn what faith really is, and how impossible it is to do without it. In that sense faith may be described as "a community

or covenant relationship".[1] But relationship to God or to Christ is not determined by relationship to the community. Under the New Covenant the believer is not on the same footing as under the Old, for in the former the relationship of personal faith is vital. "We only participate in Christ provided that we keep firm to the very end the confidence (*hypostasis*) with which we started." Now faith is confidence (*hypostasis*, xi. 1), and here it is definitely fixed upon the Unseen Christ.

When this is realised we can see that the difference on this point between Hebrews and Paul is not so great as on the surface it appears to be. As Pfleiderer says, "*the essential matter* with which we are concerned in the justifying faith of Paul, namely the inward appropriation of the principle of salvation, is not wanting in the Epistle to the Hebrews. . . . It is only in the *form* that its author differs from Paul."[2] Hebrews never speaks of being justified "by faith", or "by the blood of Christ", as Paul does; but when he writes, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all", or "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (x. 10–14), he is describing the same experience; and it is implied in that experience, as we have seen, that we must make our wills one with the will of the Sanctifier, and that is simply faith.

Certainly Paul never speaks of Jesus as a believer, as a subject of faith. Christ is set before us as our example in many things, but never in faith. With Paul faith is always faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour, "faith

[1] cf. Scott, p. 172. Strachan, *Historic Christ in the N.T.*, pp. 114, 116.
[2] *Paulinism*, 2: 84.

in the Son of God who love me and gave himself for me". Hebrews has none of Paul's warmth of personal abandonment to Christ. The men were differently built. Where Paul is outspoken Hebrews is reserved. He has no word of love towards God or towards Christ. But when he speaks of Jesus, using the friendly human name as he so often does in his great climaxes, his words take on a deeper glow and his heart has a quicker beat. Jesus is the Captain of his soul, and in that confession there is not only faith but love.

IV

In the eleventh chapter Hebrews is chiefly concerned with Faith as it works itself out in the every-day life of men, with Faith as a moral and practical energy, that dictates their career, moulds their character and shapes their destiny. There we see it as a forward-looking, forward-moving power and virtue, the secret urge, the *élan vital* of the soul, that bids nor sit nor stand but go. It is the secret of all dangerous, heroic, successful living and dying. "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." "*The Venture of Faith!*"—the phrase needs clarifying. In itself faith is no venture. There is nothing in the nature of experiment or hypothesis in faith, no make-believe, no taking things as true or acting as if they were true, in the hope that some day they may turn out to be true or be proved to be true. It is not a gamble, "betting your life that there is a

God"; that, for Hebrews, would be betting on a certainty. Faith is assurance, without a pulse of doubt or uncertainty in it. Faith is no venture, but it makes all ventures possible. "Faith is not belief in spite of evidence, but life in scorn of consequence" (Kirsopp Lake). For faith dictates a life, a task, a warfare, a pilgrimage—"it is the life to live perforcedly"—and there men have to venture greatly and take all sorts of risks. But these are incidental to the life of faith; they do not belong to its essence or touch its heart. Always there is the inward assurance, the certainty of arrival. Always there is the inward joy—a late lark singing in the heart!

For Hebrews the prime adventure is the *Pilgrim Life*, as Bunyan was quick to perceive.

Think of Abraham in his *Setting-Out*. "By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive as an inheritance, obeyed." He starts with the tremendous assurance in his heart that God has spoken to him. "And he went out not knowing whither he went." There's adventure for you!—taking the road with glowing heart, not knowing and in the best sense not caring who or what is to be met with round the next turn of the road, not knowing and not caring where the journey is to end. There's adventure, and there's Faith! Faith carries no maps; it has no need of them, for in its heart are the ways. It has the road-making faculty, and the trails blazed by Abraham and others have been broadened and beaten hard by the passing of countless feet. The tracks of the Pilgrims are the oldest of our roads, and the geographers —Hebrews, Dante, Bunyan and the rest—have got the best and most familiar of them duly set out on their

maps. And yet, when it comes to the start, and for many a day and many a mile thereafter, each soul has to go out "on his own", finding his own way in the dark, each with a great plunge into the unknown, and only God and God's word in the heart for guide. Kierkegaard has a saying to the effect that "Trusting God is to be alone in a great sea with 70,000 fathoms under one". There must be some mistake, possibly in transmission. Faith is the assurance that we are never alone on any sea, no matter how wide or wild or deep. "Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness." Like the solitary Man upon the Cross he turns it into a fellowship; he peoples it with God. "Alone; yet not alone, for the Father is with me."

Then the Sojourning. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country." The pilgrim is always moving about in worlds not realised. The World to Come is always calling him into new territory. He can never settle down and be at home in this world.

"Strange the world about me lies,
Never yet familiar grown—
Still disturbs me with surprise,
Haunts me like a face half known.

. . . . .

"So between the starry dome
And the floor of plains and seas,
I have never felt at home,
Never wholly been at ease."

And no wonder! His home, his citizenship is in heaven. A Christian of a later age has summed up the matter excellently. "For the distinction between them (Christians) and other men is neither in country, nor language, nor custom. For they do not dwell in cities

in some place of their own, nor do they use any strange variety of dialect, nor practise any extraordinary kind of life. . . . Yet while living in Greek and barbarian cities, according as each obtained his lot, and following the local customs, both in clothing and food and in the rest of life, they show forth the wonderful and confessedly strange character of the constitution of their citizenship. They dwell in their own fatherlands, but as if sojourners in them; they share all things as citizens and suffer all things as strangers. Every foreign country is their fatherland and every fatherland is a foreign country. . . . Their lot is cast in the flesh, but they do not live 'after the flesh'. They pass their time upon the earth, but they have their citizenship in heaven" (Epistle to Diognetus, Ch. v).

Sojourning, but *always Seeking!* "Now they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country of their own." They "desire", they "look for", they "seek"—their life no aimless wandering, no purposeless striving. "Finite as we are, lost though we seem to be in the woods or the wide air's wilderness, in this world of time and chance we have still, like the strayed animals or the migrating birds, our homing instinct. . . . We seek. That is a fact. We seek a city still out of sight."[1] A city, "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God". The World to Come is very near and very real to the pilgrims. The end which they seek may not be very clearly seen at the start, but glimpses come by the way. Their souls have sight of that immortal sea. "For faith," as Inge says, "is a climbing virtue, which draws us upward and

[1] Josiah Royce, quoted by E. Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 23.

onward. . . . The process of verification begins as soon as we have honestly set out to climb. We ourselves change and the world changes to our sight. The landscape opens out more and more as we get further up the hill."[1]

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises." In that "faith-land" where they had lived, there they died; their death in full accord with their life—the last step in their pilgrimage, new and strange, and taken with joy. "Not having received the promises" —never entering upon full possession, receiving only partial fulfilments, hints and intimations of a perfection further on—but seeing them from afar and hailing them with joy, as travellers greet the sun-rise, or the spires of a city at even-tide. So they died, greeting the Unseen with a cheer, and triumphing over death in their faith.

In all this there is, no doubt, a large element of idealisation. Abraham and the patriarchs are much nearer to being good Christians than they could ever have been in real life. And yet the spiritualising is not without warrant. Hebrews is only bringing out what was implicit in the promise made to Abraham, only following the actual line of development of faith in Israel. It is this deep insight that makes his eleventh chapter so true an account of Old Testament religion (D. S. Cairns). Only very gradually was the full content of the promise revealed to Israel. Only very gradually was it realised that the life of faith held within itself the germ of immortality, that life with God was the life eternal. There is nothing more wonderful in history than the age-long search of the Hebrew people for truth and righteousness and immortality. And of that

[1] *Personal Religion and the Life of Devotion*, p. 45.

search and adventure there is no better epitome than is given here in the story of Abraham and his descendants, and no truer insight into its secret than "By Faith".

Faith, however, is something more than the "*Spur to Adventure*"; it is also the very "*Soul of Endurance and Heroism*". How to maintain the freshness and enthusiasm of the start, how to bear up against the disappointments, the heart-breaks and the long delays, how to hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end: that is the question. And the answer is given in that vitalising assurance of God and Christ and the Unseen which our author calls Faith. "Faith," says Chesterton, "is always at a disadvantage; it is a perpetually defeated thing that survives all its conquerors." It endures as seeing Him who is invisible.

Of this aspect of faith the outstanding example is Moses. Think of him casting in his lot with the down-trodden Hebrews, not ashamed to call them brethren. Think of that astonishing transvaluation of values, his esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Think of him taking that reproach—the reproach which all unworldly souls, all God's servants, all his Christs (Ps. lxxxix) and Jesus Himself have had to bear, the reproach of scorn and unbelief and hatred and oppression, the reproach of the Cross—taking and not merely bearing it but wearing it proudly as an honour. Think of his forsaking Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; of "his courage in abandoning work on which his heart was set, and accepting inaction cheerfully as the will of God" (Peake). And, finally, of all the murmurings and rebellings, the advancings and retreatings, the failures, the defeats and the defeatism

of the wilderness. How intolerable and impossible it would all have been, says Hebrews, but for his faith. He endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

"Ye have need of patience" (endurance), the writer says to his friends, "that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (x. 36). You must run your race with patience; but let it be "patience with the lamp lit" (which Tertullian affirms is just another name for faith), patience looking unto Jesus, who endured the Cross, despising the shame (xii. 1).

"Endurance is the crowning quality,
And patience all the passion of great hearts;
These are their stay, and when the leaden world
Sets its hard face against their fateful thought,
And brute strength, like a scornful conqueror
Clangs his huge mace down in the other scale,
The inspired soul but flings its patience in,
And slowly that outweighs the ponderous globe—
Our faith against a whole world's unbelief,
One soul against the flesh of all mankind."

This is the aspect of faith that lay nearest to the writer's heart (vi. 11), since it bore more directly than any other upon the lives of those whom he loved. "Draw back," would they? Surely not, with such examples before them. One and all, from first to last, these Invincibles of Faith press forward, with not a look behind. "Time would fail me", he adds, "to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae" —not the most obvious examples of faith. Gideon, going in this his strength, faint yet pursuing; Barak, overcoming the jealousy, the hanging-back of the tribes, then treading down strength and leading captivity captive; Samson, out of weakness made strong and

triumphing in defeat; Jephthae, with that terrible heart-rending cry of belief in despair—"I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and *I cannot go back*"—

"Each heard clang God's 'Come!' And each was coming,
Soldiers all to forward face, not sneaks to lag behind!"

No drawing back for them, no accepting deliverance. Not for them the low road, but always the high and the difficult pass. "And truly they might have had opportunity to have returned"; but, No!—that way lay Perdition.

"Who would true valour see
Let him come hither;
One here will constant be,
Come wind, come weather;
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
To be a pilgrim."

Thus the "Faith" of Hebrews runs out into a very noble Christian Idealism. And how true it is to the stock from which it sprang! In essence it is the idealism of the Prophets and Psalmists, when they spoke of "things not heard by the ear, nor seen by the eye", and when they cried "I have no good beyond Thee", and "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". But best of all, and truest of all to the Idealism of Jesus, when He said "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God", and when He challenged His followers to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Him. "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

V

From the circumstances of the case the notion of Faith tends continually to shade off into that of Faithfulness and Loyalty. There are three great Loyalties for which the writer makes an appeal.

1. *Loyalty to the Confidence and Confession of their early days.* "Call to remembrance the former days . . . in which you endured a great fight of afflictions" (x. 32). "Hold fast that glad confidence with which you started and hold it firm to the end" (iii. 6–14). And in the same vein, "Hold fast to your Confession without wavering" (iv. 14, x. 23). Be true to that first love, that early faith and promise. Be true to yourselves. Let not what began best end worst, nor what God blest once, prove accurst.

2. *Loyalty to the Beloved Community.* "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (x. 24). Be loyal to your brethren. No separatism, no false individualism, no cliques, no standing apart from one another or from your leaders (xiii. 7, 17), in pique or in a fancied superiority; but pulling together—it is the "togetherness" that counts—striving together in the faith of the Gospel, serving one another in love, caring for and acting a bishop's part to each other (xii. 15), lest anyone fail of the Grace of God.

3. *Loyalty to Christ*—the supreme and central loyalty, that holds the others together and makes them possible. Remember Him. Consider Him. Look to Him. Trust in Him. Jesus Christ is always the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

The "Word of Exhortation" works itself out here. Hebrews concludes his epistle and sends it forth with a prayer that is both envoi and epilogue. The prayer is in the form of a Collect (cf. Nairne, *Epistle of Priesthood*, p. 427). The author sums up all his pleadings, gathers up all his desires for his friends, in one pregnant petition. They are in a difficult pass. There are fears within and fightings without. At any moment they may be called upon to make the supreme sacrifice. The path of duty is clear, but hard. So he prays that they may be prepared (the verb is the same as in the phrase "a body hast thou prepared me") or equipped by God with every good thing, every requisite, for the doing of His will. They have given their word to Christ, and there must be no drawing back. The God of Peace, in whose will is our peace, who brought up from the dead (cf. Isaiah lxiii. 11) our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood (which is His life) of the eternal covenant, will supply all our need. For it is God Himself who creates within us by Jesus Christ both the desire and the power to do His gracious will.

May the God of peace, who brought up from the dead
our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep,
in the blood of the eternal covenant, furnish
you with everything that is good for the
doing of His will, working in you
through Jesus Christ that which
is well-pleasing in His sight!
To Him be glory for
ever and ever.
Amen.

I

INDEX OF SUBJECTS

A

Altar, 175, 187
Angels, 106, 148, 176
Annihilation, 51
Apostasy, 25, 134, 178, 189
Archegos, 119
Ascension, 50, 101, 174
Atonement, day of, 159, 187
Author as Pastor, 22
— — Preacher, 20
—, name of, 23
—, reserve of, 14
—, style of, 15
—, thought of, 16

B

Baptism, 29
Beneficence, 73
Better, 59
Blood of Christ, 163

C

Camp, the, 190
Catechumens, 28, 182
Cleansing, 166
Community, change of spirit, 25
—, nature of, 30
—, origin of, 24
Confession, of faith, 28, 221
Counterparts, 39
Covenant, 56
—, New, 57,
—, God of, 65
—, Graciousness of, 60
—, Mediator of, 59, 60
—, People of, 68

D

Death, fear of, 123
Drifting, 179

E

Epistle, date of, 34
—, destination of, 32
—, origin of, 34
—, readers of, 24
Eschatology, 20
—, transmutation of, 54
Eternal, 36, 59
— Spirit, 164
Eucharist, the, 29, 64
Exhortation, Word of, 13, 222

F

Faith, 168, 198
— and Reason, 203
—, endurance of, 218
—, idealism of, 220
— in Christ, 93, 137, 210
— in God, 202
— in God's Word, 205
—, moral energy of, 213
— of Jesus, 93, 207
—, Venture of, 213
Faithfulness, 221
— of God, 196
— of Moses, 129
— of the Son, 132
Fatherhood of God, 67
Finality, 26, 88, 158, 162

G

Gethsemane, 94, 154
Grace, 60
— of God, 67

H

Hardening, 134, 180
Heavenly, 36

High Priest, Jesus as, 125, 144, 146
Hope, 200
House-Church, 26
House of God, 69, 129
—, founding of, 131
—, life of, 74
Humanity, of Son, 91
Hypostasis, 81, 137, 199, 212

I

Ideas, World of, 39
Incarnation, the, 89
Intercession, of angels, 108, 148, 176
—, of Jesus, 176

J

Jesus as High Priest, 125, 144, 146
— — Lord, 103
— — Over God's House, 128
— — Son, 79
—, his brethren, 121
—, — crowning, 113
—, — faith, 93, 207
—, — godly fear, 94, 154
—, — name, 93
—, — obedience, 95, 161
—, — perfecting, 99, 118, 155
—, — self-offering, 158, 162
—, — sinlessness, 98, 162
—, — sufferings, 96
—, — sympathy, 97, 145, 150
—, — temptations, 97
Judaism, 17, 37, 73, 189
Judgment, the, 50, 193

K

Kingdom of God, 35, 47, 53

L

Law, the, 37
Leaders, 27, 187
Logos Christology, 83
Lordship of Jesus, 105 f.
Love, brotherly, 28, 74
Loyalties, 221

M

Mark, Gospel of, 92, 179
Materialism, 186
Meals, sacrificial, 186
Ministry, the heavenly, 173
Mysticism, 29

O

Oath, the, 61
Order of Melchizedek, 156

P

Parousia, the, 35, 48
Partakers of Christ, 136, 211
Perdition, 51, 192
Perfecting, 20, 166
Persecution, 24, 185
Pilgrimage, 214
Pioneer of Faith, 208
— of Salvation, 118
Prayers of Jesus, 94, 154
Pre-existence, 85
Priesthood, essence of, 149
— of Jesus, 146 f.
— —, beginning of, 172
— —, novelty of 147
—, qualifications for, 149 f.
—, source of idea, 148
Primitive Christianity, 17
Promise, the, 60, 205

R

Rabbinical exegesis, 22, 157
Reality, spiritual, 41
Relation to Acts, 17
— John, 17, 114, 155, 177
— Paul, 16
— Synoptics, 17
Repentance, impossibility of, 194
Rest, 138 f.
Resurrection, the, 50
Revelation, in the Son, 87
Reversion to Judaism, 189

S

Sabbatismos, 139
Sacraments, the, 29

Sacrifice, 62
— and the Gospels, 170
— of Praise, 72
— of the Son, 162
Salvation, 49 f., 165, 179
Sanctifying, 166
Separatism, 183
Septuagint, the, 17
Sin, 135, 165
Son of God, the, 79 f.
— and Angels, 105
— — the Universe, 81
— as Forerunner, 103
— — High Priest, 102
— — King, 103
—, Glory of, 112, 130
—, Incarnation of, 89
—, redemptive work of, 91
—, subordination of, 83
Suffering, rationale of, 120

T

Teleology, 20
To-day, 133
Traditionalism, 181
Transcendence of God, 66
True, the, 37
Types, 37

U

Unbelief, 135

V

Vocation, priestly, 153

W

Will of God, 89, 160
Word of God, 87, 143
World to Come, 35 f., 198
— — —, Contrasts, 36
— — —, Contacts, 43
— — —, Consummation, 47
— — —, Powers of, 46
— — —, Pivot of, 47
Worship, 70

II

INDEX OF AUTHORS

A

Adam, J., 39, 46

B

Bacon, B. W., 123
Bacon, F. Lord, 151
Baillie, D. M., 135
Barnes, Monsignor, 185
Bengel, 132
Benson, A. C., 150
Bevan, Edwyn, 19, 22, 53, 77, 124
Beyschlag, W., 174
Bleek, F., 115
Bradley, F. H., 41
Bridges, R., 46
Browning, R., 195
Bruce, A. B., 61, 62, 107, 115, 136, 149, 160, 167
Burch, Vacher, 18

C

Cairns, D. S., 201, 209, 217
Campbell, McLeod, 67, 70, 114, 120, 153, 160
Carlyle, T., 60
Charles, R. H., 148
Chesterton, G. K., 218
Chrysostom, 199
Clement, of Rome, 33
Conybeare, F. C., 13
Cromwell, Oliver, 60, 183

D

Davidson, A. B., 21, 44, 60, 97, 107, 113, 139, 158, 167
Deissmann, A., 59
Denney, James, 16, 121, 161, 176
Diognetus, 215
Dodd, C. H., 21, 126, 193
Donne, J., 62
Duncan, Rabbi, 71, 178

E

Edwards, Jonathan, 178
Emerson, 14, 134
Erskine of Linlathen, 88, 169
Eusebius, 113

F

Forbes, H. P., 54
Forsyth, P. T., 90, 172

G

Gray, G. Buchanan, 113, 129
Green, T. H., 200

H

Halliday, W. R., 75
Harris, Rendel, 18
Hermas, 33, 194
Hoskyns, Sir E., 123

I

Ignatius, 185
Inge, W. R., 199, 217
Irenaeus, 59

J

Johnson, Dr. Samuel, 151
Jülicher, A., 181

K

Kennedy, H. A. A., 46, 72
Kennett, R. H., 157
Kierkegaard, 215

L

Lake, Kirsopp, 214
Leckie, J. H., 51
Lightfoot, Bishop J. B., 83
Luther, 143

M

Macgregor, G. H. C., 65
Mackinnon, J., 32
Mackintosh, H. R., 19, 55, 85, 100
McNeile, A. H., 155
Milligan, G., 32
Milton, J., 22, 81, 90, 97
Moffatt, James, 14, 18, 47, 60, 76, 81, 90, 148, 184, 185
Moore, G. F., 73
Morgan, W., 65

N

Nairne, A., 222
Nietzsche, 151

O

Oman, J., 64

P

Peake, A. S., 88, 115, 116, 218
Pfleiderer, O., 212
Philo, 18, 61, 72
Plato, 39
Plooij, D., 18

R

Rashdall, H., 119, 199
Rawlinson, A. E. J., 179
Reid, J., 120
Rendall, F., 32
Robinson, T. H., 32, 51, 152, 160
Royce, Josiah, 216

S

Schultz, H., 168
Schweitzer, A., 170
Scott, E. F., 28, 29, 40, 47, 92, 169, 182, 212
Smith, W. Robertson, 99, 115, 124
Sorley, W. R., 141
Stevenson, R. L., 197, 203
Strachan, R. H., 212
Streeter, B. H., 33
Swete, H. B., 176

T

Taylor, A. E., 51, 141, 194
Tertullian, 219
Trench, Archbishop, 95

U

Underhill, E., 30, 43, 200

W

Welch, A. C., 187
Westcott, B. F., 80, 184
Wickham, E. C., 81

Z

Zahn, T., 26, 32, 184, 191

III

INDEX OF SCRIPTURES

Exodus :
xviii., 129
xxiv., 63, 129
xxv. 9, 39
xxviii., 129
xxix. 6, 113
xxxiii. 19, 81
Numbers :
viii. 4, 39
xii., 128
xiii–xiv., 133
Deuteronomy :
xxxii. 43, 106
xxxiii. 2, 109
Joshua :
i. 5, 75
2 Samuel :
vii. 14, 106
1 Chronicles :
xxviii. 11, 39
Psalms :
ii. 7, 106
viii. 4, 110
xl. 6, 159
xlv. 6, 107
xcv. 7, 133
xcvi. 8, 72
xcix. 6, 129
cii. 25, 107
civ. 4, 107
cx. 1, 103, 107, 148
Isaiah :
xlix. 24, 123
liii. 49
liii. 12, 123
Jeremiah :
xxxi. 31, 57
Ezekiel :
xliii. 10, 39
Zechariah :
vi. 11, 113
Wisdom of Solomon :
ii. 23, 122
vii. 25, 83
ix. 8, 39
Enoch :
148
Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs :
108, 148
Matthew :
xii. 28, 45
Mark :
i. 1, 92, 179
ii. 20, 170
iii. 22, 123
iii. 29, 194
viii. 31 f., 49, 170
Luke :
vii. 36, 151
John :
iii. 19, 50
viii. 35, 133
x. 18, 114
x. 30, 101
xii. 21 f., 114, 155
xii. 31, 123
xiii. 31, 114
xvi. 16, 54
xvii. 19, 114
xix. 30, 155
Acts :
vii. 2, 17
x. 38, 123
xiii. 15, 13
xviii. 2, 191
Romans :
i. 4, 102

Romans:
i. 13, 33
iii. 25, 126
xv. 4, 30
1 Corinthians:
ii. 8, 123
ix. 10, 30
x. 11, 30
xv. 26, 123
xvi. 22, 54
2 Corinthians:
iii. 6 f., 58
iii. 13, 57
Galatians:
iii. 7, 31
iii. 19, 109
iii. 29, 31
iv. 24, 58
Ephesians:
i. 21, 46
Philippians:
ii. 5, 115
Colossians:
i. 13–20, 83
ii. 15, 123
Hebrews:
i. 1–3, 20, 80, 87
i. 4–14, 59, 106 f.
i. 10, 36
ii. 1–4, 109, 128, 179
ii. 2 f., 51, 207
ii. 3, 24, 33, 45, 105
ii. 5–18, 35, 82, 93, 110 f.
ii. 9, 93, 96, 111
ii. 13, 93
ii. 16, 31
ii. 18, 97, 132
iii. 1, 28, 46, 210
iii. 1–6, 128 f., 180
iii. 3, 91, 114
iii. 6, 128, 200, 205, 221
iii. 6–19, 133
iii. 12, 189, 193
iii. 13, 26
iii. 14, 46, 136, 211, 221
iv. 1–13, 138
iv. 2, 87, 206
iv. 12–13, 50, 143, 205
Hebrews:
iv. 14–16, 28, 96, 97, 98, 144, 210, 221
v. 1 f., 150
v. 4–10, 59, 114, 153
v. 7 f., 82, 94, 95, 96, 132
v. 9, 36, 120, 210
v. 11–vi. 8, 181, 207
vi. 1, 28, 135, 202
vi. 2, 29, 32, 36
vi. 4 f., 46, 51
vi. 5, 35, 46, 143
vi. 6, 189, 193
vi. 9, 76
vi. 10, 74, 137, 196
vi. 11, 200, 219
vi. 12, 182
vi. 13 f., 62
vi. 18–20, 103, 200, 202
vii. 1 f., 82, 156
vii. 16, 101
vii. 19, 37, 59, 200, 202
vii. 20 f, 61
vii. 22, 59
vii. 24, 91
vii. 25 f., 102
viii. 5, 37
viii. 6, 59
ix. 14, 36, 59, 82, 90, 98, 162
ix. 15, 37, 59, 131
ix. 23, 59
ix. 24, 37, 174
ix. 26–28, 35, 48, 50, 53, 134, 165
x. 5–18, 159
x. 5, 82, 89, 95
x. 7, 153
x. 10, 161, 212
x. 12, 91, 104, 175
x. 14, 166, 212
x. 22, 29, 70, 200, 205
x. 23, 28, 200, 210, 221
x. 25, 26, 183
x. 26 f., 46, 51, 74, 128, 193
x. 32 f., 46, 75, 137, 221
x. 35–36, 196, 206, 219
x. 37, 54
x. 38 f., 51
x. 39, 51, 189, 193
xi. 1, 198, 200, 212

Hebrews :
xi. 3, 37
xi. 6, 204
xi. 8 f., 214 f.
xi. 13, 44, 217
xi. 23 f., 218
xi. 26, 192, 218
xi. 27, 200
xi. 32, 219
xi. 39, 206
xii. 1, 135, 207, 219
xii. 2, 93, 96, 132, 207
xii. 3–17, 96, 120
xii. 4, 185
xii. 10 f., 76
xii. 15–17, 28, 76, 136, 193, 221
xii. 21, 205
xii. 22–25, 42, 51, 59, 107
xii. 26, 53
xii. 27, 36
xii. 28, 55, 71, 94
xiii. 1–7, 74
Hebrews :
xiii. 2, 109
xiii. 4, 32
xiii. 5, 185, 205
xiii. 7, 27, 187, 208, 221
xiii. 9, 32, 135, 186
xiii. 10, 175
xiii. 12, 131, 166
xiii. 13, 190
xiii. 14, 44
xiii. 15, 72
xiii. 16, 73
xiii. 17, 27, 187, 221
xiii. 20, 59, 101, 105, 187, 222
xiii. 22, 13
xiii. 23, 33
xiii. 24, 26, 27, 33
1 Peter :
ii. 21, 96
Revelation :
viii. 3 f., 108, 174

BS
3775
.A37

1254909

Alexander

A priest for ever.

(A study of Hebrews)

1254909

BS
3775
.A37

SWIFT HALL LIBRARY